February 2014

salt

Wilmington

The Movie Issue

Tales of Wilmywood

The Man Who Loves Blue Velvet
Inside the Muppet House
The Greensman Cometh

TOUCH *her* HEART WITH A

PANDORA GIFT SET

Available starting January 15

See store for details. Good while supplies last.

Sterling silver charms from $25

INTRODUCING PANDORA'S 2014 VALENTINE'S DAY COLLECTION.

REEDS®
REEDS.COM *Jewelers*

MAYFAIRE TOWN CENTER
910.256.2962

INDEPENDENCE MALL
910.799.6810

PANDORA®
UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

PANDORA Valentine's Day gift sets starting at $125.*

*While supplies last. See store for details.

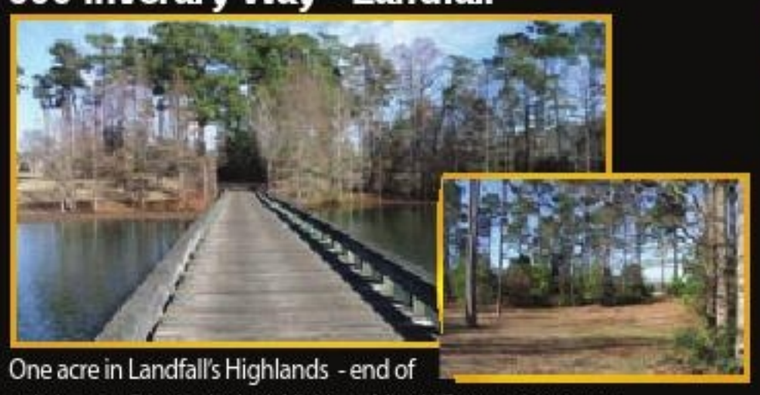
Some jewelry displayed patented (US Pat. No. 7,007,507) • © Pandora • PANDORA.NET

WILMINGTON'S WATERFRONT SPECIALIST

Fine Homes

WWW.VANCEYOUNG.COM

600 Inverary Way · Landfall



One acre in Landfall's Highlands - end of cul-de-sac. Overlooks Jack Nicklaus Marsh Course **$518,900**

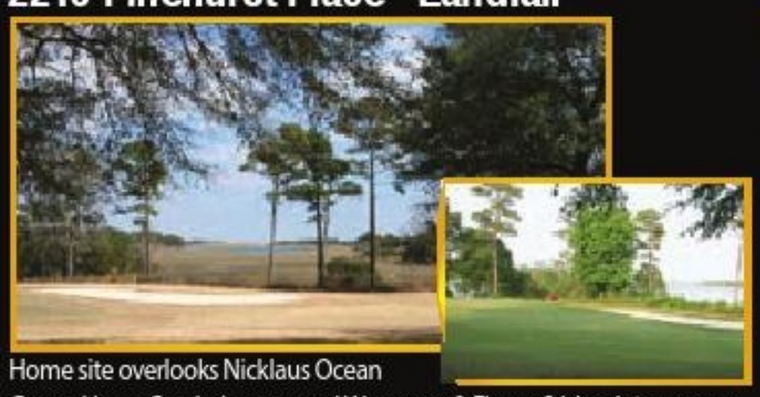
1024 Arboretum Drive · Landfall

Features vaulted great room with stone fireplace, cook's kitchen, vaulted breakfast area & family room. **$625,000**

2020 Spanish Wells Drive · Landfall

Natural light, prevailing breezes on two lots. On Landfall's Pete Dye Golf Course, par 5, hole #7. **$690,000**

2216 Pinehurst Place · Landfall



Home site overlooks Nicklaus Ocean Green, Howe Creek , Intracoastal Waterway & Figure 8 Island. **$749,000**

303 Cabbage Inlet · Windchase

Oyster Bay/Cabbage Inlet - 1.78 acre home site - high elevation, spectacular views & 35' boat slip. **$895,000**

2030 Balmoral Place · Landfall

Desirable estate home site overlooking Howe Creek. Over 2 acres w/ golf course access to Nicklaus #4. **$995,000**

2060 Deer Island Lane · Landfall

Property backs up to 10 acres of conservation. Two pools, greenhouse, spectacular outdoor lighting. **$989,000**

1611 Landfall Drive · Landfall

Overlooks Intracoastal Waterway and Wrightsville Beach. Across from Pete Dye Clubhouse & course. **$1,199,000**

1 Oyster Catcher · Figure 8 Island

Unique Figure 8 Island listing. Wrap around decks provide perfect views of ocean, sound & inlet. **$1,595,000**

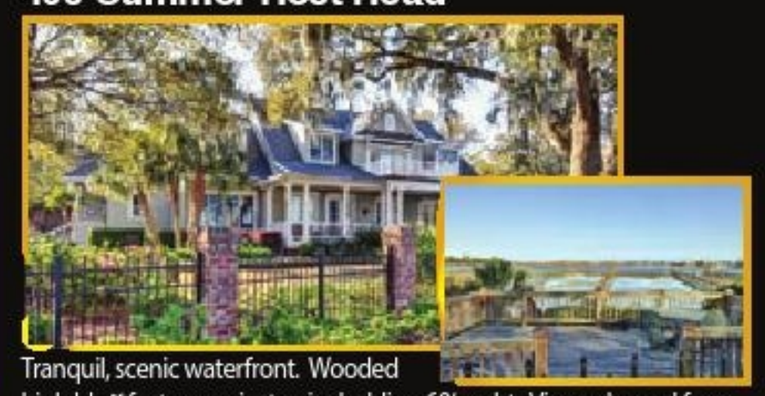
7807 Masonboro Sound

On Masonboro Sound Road. Intracoastal waterway views to Masonboro Island and ocean. 5.2 acres includes a 2,000 sq. ft., 4 bedroom, 3 bath cottage. **$1,695,000**

6013 Wellesley Drive · White Hall

The scene for several movies and television series, features 4 ½ acres, 5300 sq. ft. house, salt water pool, private lighted tennis court, 3 bedroom cottage **$2,200,000**

403 Summer Rest Road



Tranquil, scenic waterfront. Wooded high bluff features private pier holding 60' yacht. Views abound from every room of classic 5,000+ sq. ft. cottage design **$2,695,000**

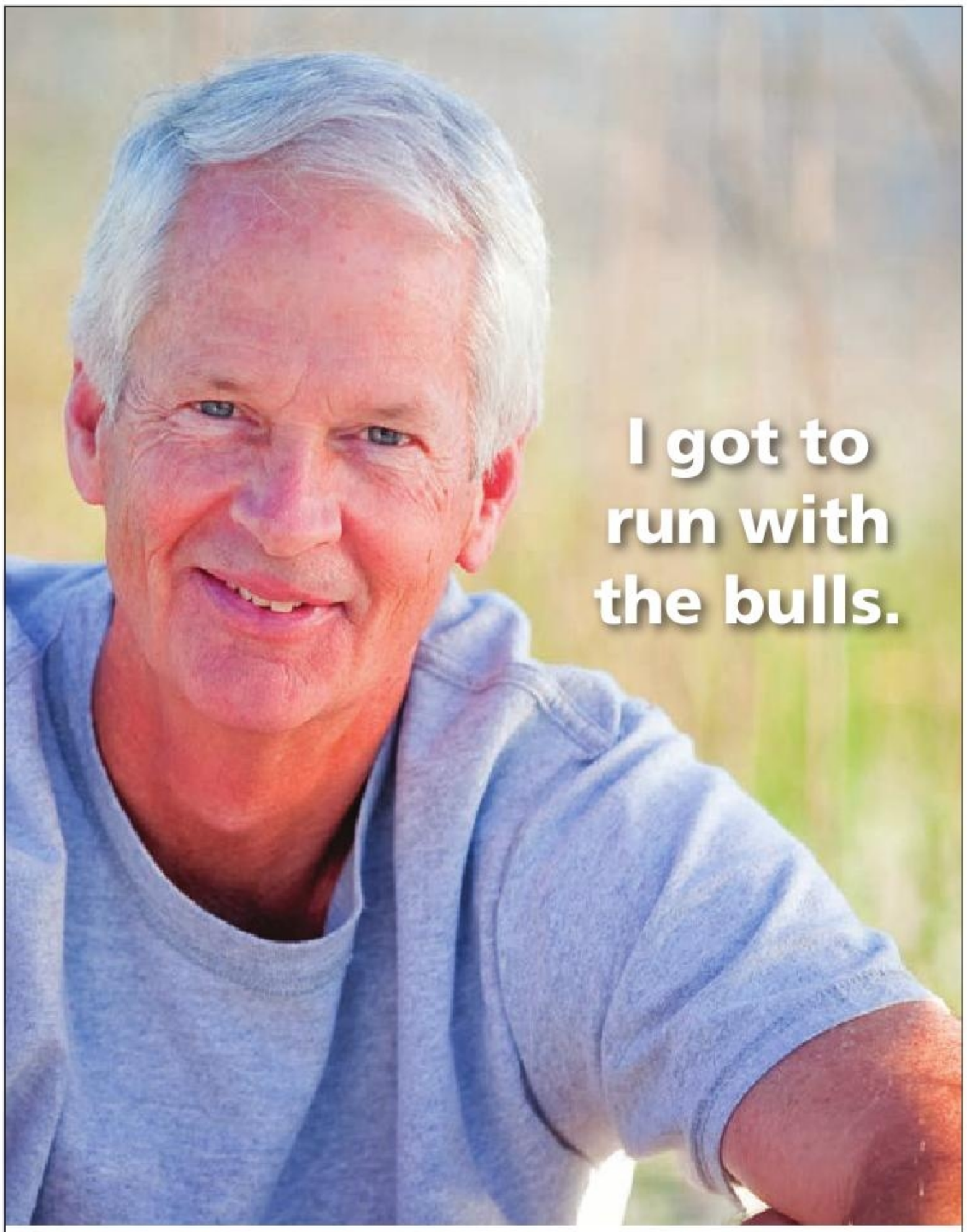
VANCE YOUNG

WWW.VANCEYOUNG.COM

Intracoastal REALTY CORPORATION

Experience the Exceptional

VANCE YOUNG
BROKER/REALTOR®
OFFICE: 910.232.8850



When Jim's heart was racing dangerously, his cardiologists diagnosed the problem and performed pacemaker defibrillator surgery at NHRMC Heart Center. He crossed off this bucket list item in Spain 11 months later.

www.nhrmc.org

New Hanover Regional Medical Center
Heart Center

Regional heart center. Nationally recognized.

Salt
MAGAZINE

VOLUME 2, NO. 1

221 N. Front Street, Suite 201
Wilmington, NC 28401
910.833.7159

Jim Dodson, Editor
jim@saltmagazinenc.com

Andie Stuart Rose, Creative Director
andie@saltmagazinenc.com

Ashley Wahl, Senior Editor
910.833.7159 · ashley@saltmagazinenc.com

Judi Hewett, Graphic Designer

Kira Schoenfelder, Graphic Designer

Lauren Shumaker, Graphic Designer

Sara King, Proofreader

Mary Novitsky, Proofreader

CONTRIBUTORS

Lavonne Adams, Tom Bryant, Susan Campbell, Frank Daniels III, Clyde Edgerton, Jason Frye, Virginia Holman, Ann Ipock, Skip Maloney, Jamie Lynn Miller, Sandra Redding, Gwenyfar Rohler, Dana Sachs, Noah Salt, Helen Shalfi, Lee Smith, Stephen E. Smith, Astrid Stellanova, Barbara Sullivan, Bill Thompson

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jim Bridges, Steve Fox, Erin Pike, Mike McCloy, Rick Ricozzi, Mark Steelman, James Stefiuk, Ariel Keener, Bill Ritenour

David Woronoff, Publisher

ADVERTISING SALES

Diane Keenan, Sales & Circulation Director
(o) 910.833.7158 · (c) 910.833.4098
diane@saltmagazinenc.com

Tessa Young
518.207.5571 · tessa@saltmagazinenc.com

ADVERTISING GRAPHIC DESIGN
910.693.2469 · lauren@saltmagazinenc.com

©Copyright 2014. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.
Salt *Magazine is published by* The Pilot LLC

THE PILOT

MICHELLE CLARK

WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH AGENT.COM

2221 Moreland Dr

Nice Privacy inside Landfall - $799,900

6 Keaton Ave

Charming & great location - $282,000

6324 Guinea Ln

Incredible ocean & ICW views!

7227 Masonboro Sound Rd

Waterfront estate lot - $595,000

127 Driftwood Ct

Wrightsville Beach! - $349,900

1356 Grandiflora Ln

Magnolia Greens golf course lot - $89,000

Intracoastal
REALTY CORPORATION
Experience the Exceptional

WITH YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY...

Michelle Clark
Realtor®/Broker
910 367 9767

FEBRUARY 2014

Features

37 **Winter, Halyburton Park**
Poetry by Lavonne J. Adams

38 **Making Magic**
By Skip Maloney
A few words with EUE/Screen Gem's Bill Vassar

42 **The Art of Movie Watching**
By Jamie Lynn Miller
At Jengo's Playhouse, the Cucalorus magic happens year-round

44 **Paint the Town Blue**
Could a *Blue Velvet* bike tour attract a new generation of filmmakers to the Port City? Steve Fox thinks so

50 **Fish**
Short Story by Jill McCorkle
He was scared of the water, but he loved to step into it—a metaphor for his life

53 **The Snow**
By Helen Shalfi
Second place winner of our first annual *Salt* Magazine Memoir Contest

55 **Story of a House**
By Ashley Wahl
For Sara Allen, home is where the Muppets are

64 **The Greensman Cometh**
By Barbara Sullivan
Meet Tim Taylor, plant wrangler and imaginary garden creator extraordinaire

67 **February Almanac**
By Noah Salt
Camellia madness, Dickinson, and modern science's St. Nicolaus

Departments

6 **Homeplace**
By Jim Dodson

8 **SaltWorks**
The best of Wilmington

11 **Front Street Spy**
By Ashley Wahl

12 **Stagelife**
By Gwenyfar Rohler

14 **Omnivorous Reader**
By Stephen E. Smith

17 **NC Writer's Notebook**
By Sandra Redding

19 **She Talks Funny**
By Ann Ipock

21 **Spirits**
By Frank Daniels III

22 **Lunch With A Friend**
By Dana Sachs

24 **Man on the Town**
By Jason Frye

26 **Saltywords**
By Gwenyfar Rohler

29 **Notes From the Porch**
By Bill Thompson

31 **Birdwatch**
By Susan Campbell

32 **Sporting Life**
By Tom Bryant

34 **Excursions**
By Virginia Holman

70 **Calendar**
February happenings

74 **Port City People**
Out and about

79 **Accidental Astrologer**
By Astrid Stellanova

80 **Papadaddy's Mindfield**
By Clyde Edgerton

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM BRIDGES OF JULIANNE HOUGH ON THE SET OF *SAFE HAVEN*.

PHOTOGRAPH THIS PAGE BY JIM BRIDGES OF GREG KINNEAR AT WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH DURING THE FILMING OF *STUCK IN LOVE*.

my Glen Meade Center for Women's Health

NHRMC Physician Group

A comprehensive OB/GYN practice offering patients **12 physicians**, **two nurse practitioners**, **two locations**, and divisions specializing in **maternal fetal medicine, bladder control issues, and robotic surgery**. Call us today for an appointment or for more information.

myglenmeade.com

910.763.9833

Wilmington: 1809 Glen Meade Road

Leland: The Villages at Brunswick Forest
1333 S. Dickinson Dr., Suite 110

Andrew R. Cracker, MD
David P. Mason, MD
Clarence L. Wilson, II, MD
H. Kyle Rhodes, MD
Timothy L. Chase, MD
G. Daniel Robison, IV, MD
Andrea C. Foiles, MD
Rachel Z. Jones, MD
Cynthia K. Pierson, MD
Pamela R. Novosel, MD
Jeffrey W. Wright, MD, MFM
K. Brooke Chalk, MD
Susan B. Lorencz, FNP
Lauren A. Marshall, WHNP

©2014 Glen Meade Center For Women's Health

OBSTETRICS GYNECOLOGY ROBOTIC SURGERY MATERNAL FETAL MEDICINE INCONTINENCE

My Rubber Soul

By Jim Dodson

It was a moment that would change America forever. A cute girl named Trudy McGivern in Miss Esther Christianson's Sunday School class leaned over, bit her lower lip and whispered excitedly: "Are you going to watch them?"

She clearly wasn't paying attention to Miss Esther's Bible story.

The date was February 9, 1964, a cold and rainy Sunday morning in Greensboro. Exactly one week before, on Groundhog's Day, I turned 11. Cute girls were suddenly of great interest to me, Trudy in particular.

"Who do you mean?" I whispered back.

"The Beatles, *silly* . . ." she said, weirdly blushing. "Haven't you heard? They're on the *Ed Sullivan Show* tonight."

I remember wondering why just saying "the Beatles" could make Trudy McGivern blush. I'd heard of the Beatles, of course, had just read about how "Beatlemania" was sweeping Great Britain and soon headed to America. A couple of their hit songs — "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "She Loves You" — had zoomed to the top of the pop music charts and were suddenly all over my favorite radio station in town. I liked both songs, though they certainly wouldn't make me blush.

I liked the the *Ed Sullivan Show*, too, which I'd watched faithfully on our black and white Philco TV along with Walter Cronkite's popular history documentary show, *The Twentieth Century*, for years. Sunday night, in fact, was America's best night for TV, or at least my favorite, probably because it was the only night of the week I was permitted to watch our new RCA Colortrak TV past my usual 9 p.m. bedtime. *Bonanza* and *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color* never looked so good.

Admittedly, I was mildly intrigued to hear that the Beatles were going to appear live on TV that very evening, but frankly still in the clouds from an even bigger event earlier that week. After receiving a new Stella Concertmaster guitar for my birthday on Groundhog's Day, my father arranged for two friends and me to go backstage and meet Peter, Paul and Mary, America's greatest folk singing trio, after their concert at the Greensboro Coliseum. As it worked out, Mary Travers vanished quickly, but Paul Stookey and Peter Yarrow stuck around to chat with a cluster of wide-eyed kids and even allowed me to briefly play one of Paul's guitars. He was amused when I strummed the chords of "Puff the Magic Dragon," their own hit song on the charts that faraway winter half a century ago. He then took the guitar and played the song leaving us in silent awe. Peter, Paul and Mary had my heart.

So the Beatles, as you might imagine, weren't the top of my chart. Even so, out of simple curiosity, I plunked down cross-legged in front of our TV set at 8 p.m. that dreary February night and watched the Beatles impressively perform three different songs on the show amid orgiastic screams from hundreds of teenage girls packed into the CBS studio from which the show was broadcast. They were weeping and climbing out of the seats, pulling at their hair and even attempting to climb over balcony railings just to get at the "Fab Four," making Trudy McGivern's blush look like child's play.

"The thing is," John Lennon reflected on Beatlemania some years later, "in America, it just seemed ridiculous — I mean, the idea of having a hit record over there. It was just something you could never do."

But somehow they did — registering nine songs, in fact, in the Billboard Top 100 for 1964, an unprecedented five hits alone in the top 20 for the year. Within weeks Beatlemania had hit America full force. Celebrities began wearing Beatles wigs and "The Beatles Are Coming" bumper stickers sprouted everywhere, including on my own mother's Buick LeSabre. She loved the Beatles, particular Paul McCartney.

Paul made every girl swoon, or so it seemed, from cute Trudy McGivern to my own Southern mama — who even purchased my bald-headed father his own Beatles wig for fun. He wore it to cocktail parties for years.

The same Capital Records company that had rejected three Beatles songs in 1963 poured an unprecedented $50,00 into a national publicity blitz, resulting in a commercial avalanche of Beatles souvenirs. At my elementary school, Beatle magazines and bubble-gum filled Beatle cards proliferated almost overnight — and were promptly banned from playground commerce by our dark-hearted principal.

Another British Invasion group was also pretty popular that Februrary, charting five pop hits in Billboard's Top 100. Their name was the Dave Clark Five and they would have 17 Top 40 hits before they fizzled out three years later, appearing on the *Ed Sullivan Show* a record 18 times.

Truthfully, in the beginning, I liked them more than the Beatles, which explains why when the DC5 came to the Greensboro Coliseum during the first national tour of a British pop band, I once again snagged a backstage pass to meet the band before their performance.

Sadly, I recall very little from the encounter save for exchanging a brief few words with a visibly bored Lenny, the lead guitarist, whose accent was so thick I didn't understand a word he said. Their music quickly lost its appeal.

Coming just three months on the heels of the tragic assassination of a president, more than one '60s historian has concluded, the frenzied, landmark debut of the Beatles on Ed Sullivan proved to be perhaps the other most significant and far-reaching event of the decade.

They argue, and I don't disagree, that the Beatles were initially the lift America needed in order to get over the protracted nightmare of John Kennedy's murder — a Valentine to America in the form of young mop-headed troubadours purveying

catchy guitar tunes about love and holding hands — but in a broader context ultimately a powerful agent of transformation that reshaped American society and set the stage for the racial and anti-war tumults that soon followed, a vast cultural gestalt that woke up the nation from its sleepy suburban prosperity.

By the time my guitar lessons at Moore Music Company allowed me to teach myself basically every song off *Rubber Soul*, the sixth studio album the Beatles released in late 1965, I was fully onboard with those who believed The Beatles were the musical voice of my generation. George Harrison's introduction of the sitar in "Norwegian Wood" took popular music far out of its normal boundaries and established a new frontier for rock experimentation, while the band's use of American R&B and soul influences matched wih conventional orchestral influences marked it as their most daring and influential album yet — shaping my own rubber soul. Not surprisingly, Harrison became my favorite Beatle.

Over the span of just seven short years, the brilliance of McCartney and Lennon's songwriting skills, Harrison's extraordinary guitar, and the band's revolutionary ever-changing musicality — evolving from the smiling lads who caused a near riot on *Ed Sullivan* to the existential flower-power poets and members of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band whose *Magical Mystery Tour* redefined pop culture before they finally "Let it Be" and broke apart in 1970 — would never be matched or equaled.

That year I was a junior at Grimsley High, playing my gently weeping guitar in a popular quartet from the school choir called the "Queensmen" and teaching guitar at Lawndale Music Company — wooing my girlfriend Kristin with my favorite song from *Rubber Soul*, Lennon's and McCartney's incomparable "In My Life," which I sang and played solo at a final choir performance for the year.

Even today, when I hear this haunting song it stops me cold in my tracks, probably because my sweet girl Kristin died less than four years later in a manner every bit as senseless and world-changing as the deranged fan who shot and killed John Lennon.

There are places I remember
All my life, though some have changed
Some forever not for better,
Some have gone and some remain
All these places have their moments,
With lovers and friends I still can recall
Some are dead and some are living
In my life I've loved them all.

As illogical as it may sound, I never played the song again. But this month I fully expect to hear it and many others owing to the new wave of Beatlemania that will hit every conceivable TV, internet music and radio outlet within days — all in celebration of, and stemming from, that historic February night in 1964 when the Beatles debuted on Ed Sullivan. There are even two documentaries and a film set too.

For those of us who grew up with the Beatles and their music, much time has passed and healed many things, leaving only the bitterseet memories of people and places we loved, a world before now.

Ironically, several years ago, a friend phoned me excitedly one afternoon and insisted I pick up *USA Today*, which had published a feature in its Thursday book section about the favorite books of celebrities.

One of those listed was Paul Stookey of Peter, Paul and Mary fame, a resident of Blue Hill, Maine, which was just up the highway from our village on the coast. The book he cited was *Final Rounds*, of all things, the book in which I told the tale of Kristin's murder and how it changed my life. Save for that backstage encounter 50 years ago, I never got to meet Paul Stookey again. But if I ever get that privilege, I plan to thank him for his kind words about my book and — more important — being my first musical hero, even before The Beatles shook up the world and made Trudy McGivern blush.

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@saltmagazinenc.com

Pelican Family Medicine

"We're here and we care"

Pelican Family Medicine is a small Family Medicine Clinic started in 2001 by Dr M. Samuel Armitage.

In 2006 we opened our Satelite Clinic, Pelican Family Medical Clinic, located at 204 South Walker in Burgaw.
In 2008 we opened our second Satelite Clinic at 5905 Carolina Beach Road in the Monkey Junction Area of Wilmington.
Since 2003 Dr Armitage has been joined by Cheryl Smith, FNP-C, Carrie Waters, PA, and Marian Guill, FNP-C

Our goal is to help you and your family achieve the best possible health.

We are a full service practice, dealing with pediatric care, adolescent medicine, women's health, adult medicine, preventive medicine, and geriatric care.

Dr Armitage has special interest in weight loss counseling, diabetic care and education, preventive care and health care screening, and the treatment of common dermatologic problems.

5429 Wrightsville Avenue
Wilmington, NC - Telephone (910) 792 -1001
(just east of Cape Fear Hospital with public transportation available)

Original Paintings & Prints

Shore to Shore ART GALLERY

10-2 OR BY APPOINTMENT MONDAY THRU SATURDAY
5423 WRIGHTSVILLE AVE • WILMINTON, NC 28403
910.616.1966 • SHORETOSHORELLC@YAHOO.COM

Salt WORKS

Flowery Pros

At the Tidewater Camellia Club Show, which happens Saturday, February 22, from 1–5 p.m., over 1,000 magnificent blooms will be carefully examined by American Camellia Society judges. The public is invited to marvel at no charge. Event highlights include floral displays and a children's art exhibit. Camellias available for purchase, but the smells are free. Walter L. Parsley Elementary School, 3518 Masonboro Loop Road, Wilmington. Info: www.tidewatercamelliaclub.org.

Papadaddy & Co.

In the pages of last month's *Salt*, novelist Lee Smith wrote about the "magic world" of Lou Crabtree, the sweet-natured eccentric who opened Lee's eyes to the healing powers of language and the joys of buckeyes and pokeberry ink. This month, find fiction by Jill McCorkle on page 50, and next month, new work by Randall Kenan. Why the all-star lineup? Wilmington's first annual BooksmARTs is on the horizon. On Saturday, March 8, Papadaddy Clyde Edgerton and three of his friends (Kenan, McCorkle and Smith), all great American writers, will appear at 3 p.m. in the Lumina Theater on campus at UNCW. Edgerton will interview them about their work and writing process, and the session will be filmed in front of a live audience. Admission is $25. Proceeds benefit the Arts Council of Wilmington and New Hanover County. Area book clubs are invited to submit questions addressed to one or more of the authors (email them to info@artscouncilofwilmington.org). Edgerton says he'll try to ask your question—"or one much like it"—during the interview. For more information, visit www.artscouncilofwilmington.org. And to read about Edgerton's day as a movie star—or how he nearly got caught with his pants down, so to speak—don't miss his back-page essay in this month's "Movie Issue."

Living the Dream

On Saturday, February 8, 8 p.m., the Wilmington Symphony Orchestra presents "A Change is Gonna Come," a concert that commemorates the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Bill through the music of the era and readings from Dr. Martin Luther King's work. Program features a compilation of Civil Rights songs plus Sam Cooke's 1964 classic, "A Change is Gonna Come," which was written in a bus after a sit-in demonstration. The Williston Alumni Community Choir and student concerto competition winners join the symphony for the celebration. Tickets: $27; $25; $6/youth. Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts.

Walk to the Rhythm

Piano maestro/entertainer Grenoldo Frazier will be inducted into the Wilmington Walk of Fame on Thursday, February 6, 2:30 p.m. at the Walk of Fame Plaza at the Cotton Exchange—same day the 2014 North Carolina Jazz Festival begins (check out the incredible lineup and performer profiles at www.ncjazzfestival.com). Walk of Fame Info: www.celebratewilmington.org; grenoldofrazier.webs.com.

Movie Magic

Per usual, Cinematique brings the best of alternative cinema to Thalian's big screen. This month, don't miss *Philomena* (February 3–5, 7:30 p.m), the British comedy-drama from Academy Award-nominated director Stephen Frears (*The Queen, Dangerous Liaisons*), written by and starring Steve Coogan (*The Trip*) with Dame Judi Dench (*Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, Skyfall*) as Philomena Lee. Return to Thalian (the Studio Theater) February 10–15 for Oscar Shorts (see website for details). Admission: $8. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.whqr.org/cinematique.

Fabled Waters

This month, February 1–2 and 6–9, Thalian Association presents *Big River*, an adaptation of Twain's timeless tale about a boy named Huckleberry Finn and his incredible journey down the Mighty Mississippi with a runaway slave named Jim. Celebrate Black History Month with this gripping, award-winning musical. Tickets: $30; $15 (Thursday). Showtime: 8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday). Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.thalian.org.

Hollywood East

Monday, February 10, join the Friends of the Library at 6 p.m. for an exclusive, "behind-the-scenes" panel discussion about Hollywood East. Film industry professionals include Johnny Griffin (director, Wilmington Regional Film Commission), Bill Vassar (executive vice president, EUE/Screen Gems Studios), Vanessa Neimeyer (NCasting), and Terry Linehan (lecturer at UNCW Film Studies/filmmaker). Jeff Hidek of *StarNews* moderates. Admission is free. Northeast Regional Library, David M. Paynter Assembly Room, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6371 or www.nhcgov.com/library.

The Local Circuit

We at *Salt* decided to make February our official movie month, but films — and film festivals — keep our city kicking year-round. Mark your calendar. Here's a preview of what's to come:

North Carolina Black Film Festival, March 13–16

A four-day juried and invitational festival of independent motion pictures by African-American filmmakers that showcases features, shorts, animation, and documentary films. Info: www.blackartsalliance.org.

Surfalorus Film Festival, July

The third annual Surfalorus Film Festival celebrates the 50th anniversary of the quintessential indie surf film, *The Endless Summer*. Three days of outdoor screenings (hot new surf films and documentaries about coastal issues) in Carolina Beach, Wrightsville Beach and Downtown Wilmington. Info: www.surfalorus.com.

Cucalorus Film Festival, November

Wilmington's biggie. Cucalorus draws hundreds of filmmakers, artists, and underground movie buffs to downtown Wilmington for screenings of over 200 films from around the globe. Info: www.cucalorus.org.

Wilmington Jewish Film Festival, April 3–6

Experience worldwide Jewish cultural practices, new cinematic methods, and illuminating portrayals of Jewish history through dramas, documentaries, comedies, and shorts. All screenings take place at Thalian Hall. Visit www.facebook.com/WilmingtonJewishFilmFestival for information on selected films as festival nears.

Cape Fear Independent Film Festival, May 1–4

This annual rite of spring brings new and independent artistic visions to the local community, highlighting works by North Carolina filmmakers. This year, you decide what happens. Call for entries now open. Info: www.cfifn.org.

If you must...

nedleary
PHOTOGRAPHY

Arabian Nights

Cafe communion with a slight hip-hop buzz

By Ashley Wahl

On a wet, blustery night good for staying in and streaming movies, lovers play footsie in the smoky haze of a BYOB hookah lounge on Market Street. The ambient glow of black lights and burning coals creates a scene that is part nightclub, part urban shisha den. Here, the ancient art of puffing smoke enchants a varied crowd of twenty-somethings. And though the belly dancer is not here — "she's injured," hosts explain — the people-watching is first-rate.

**

At Arabian Nights, which is right across the street from the best veggie samosas in town, nearly every seat is taken, including a VIP section where silk fabrics and decorative wall lanterns add Middle Eastern flair. The room smells like pomegranate and jasmine, but the shisha (tobacco) menu reveals an extensive selection of more than thirty flavors, among them an exotic blend called hashbash (didn't ask). To enhance the experience: Add juice or ice to the hookah base.

College kids and those fresh-out gather round ornate water pipes, some with as many as four hoses. To most, smoking is an art form: Breathe in cool smoke, exhale, look cool. Servers wear tiny vests like *Aladdin's* Abu.

**

In the Arab world, hookah is a social experience — a respected tradition that provides cafe communion and a slight head high. The flashing lights and the thumping bass make this place a whole new world.

The dance floor is empty. DJ Sparkz mashes hip-hop with old school pop songs while people hide behind iPhones, quietly singing along. Others blow bouncing smoke bubbles.

"It's an age-old trick," says Dakota, a lanky male server with Michael Cera mannerisms and quirky black-framed glasses.

All you need is a plastic bottle and a bowl of soapy water. It doesn't hurt to have an audience.

There are at least three kinds of bubble blowers here:

1. Those striving to engineer the biggest possible bubble.
2. Those who, upon bubble completion, promptly burst their own bubble before onlookers have the chance. (Popped bubbles look like puffball mushrooms.)
3. Those who enter a kind of deep, meditative trance while playing with their bubbles, with the kind of concentration you might expect from someone spinning poi. As they gently control bubble flight, they look like arm-waving sorcerers.

Bubble blowers of the third variety are, without question, the crowd favorite.

**

As the night progresses, and folks return from beer runs — a friendly stranger offers a frosted can of Budweiser — people start moving. It begins with subtle shoulder rolls.

First line of "Billie Jean" and three young women (call them Dreamettes) begin wriggling in their seats. Next, an "elbow dancer." The guy in the Denver Nuggets cap flaps his arms as if preparing for flight.

The DJ does a subtle head bob, the music shifts, and an early '90s mega-hit wows the crowd.

Whoomp! (There It Is)

The room erupts. The dance floor's still clear, but the crowd is grooving — minus the sorcerer, who is working a wonky smoke bubble for an audience of one.

**

Arabian Nights advertises belly dance performances on Saturday nights. Tuesday is Movie Night — mostly Redbox flicks — and Karaoke Thursdays are not to be missed.

"It's pretty hilarious actually," says Dakota, sweeping wavy brown hair away from his boyish face. "If you want to come in here and sing Miley Cyrus' 'Wrecking Ball,' nobody's going to stop you."

Or you can busy yourself with smoke bubbles. The crowd will love it.

Front Street may be home base, but senior editor Ashley Wahl is prone to wander.

Love Hurts

But Raynor and Corvino are definitely funnier together than apart

By Gwenyfar Rohler

"You weren't fine when I made jokes about how you love Pepper more than me," Beth Raynor comments to her boyfriend and comedy partner, Anthony Corvino. "That's where the line is. I can talk about our sex life, but I can't talk about the dog."

As regulars at the stand-up shows here in Wilmington, Anthony Corvino and Beth Raynor have developed a style of comedy that would make George Burns and Gracie Allen blush. Truth be told, it's a bit like couple's therapy with a roomful of people squirming in their seats, watching. Raynor has no problem whatsoever discussing their sex life or any other aspect of their relationship in intimate and graphic detail. In this day and age, that wouldn't be shocking except that:

a) Wilmington is a small town and we actually know these people;

b) She's incredibly beautiful in a very little-girl-sort-of-way, so it's unsettling to hear her describe things you normally would only tell your best friend in the strictest confidence, to a roomful of people;

and

c) Her boyfriend, Anthony Corvino, the man she is talking about, is standing right there.

It is so uncomfortable it provokes laughter. Naturally, when Corvino gets the microphone back, he must defend himself and tell *his* side of the story, with Raynor in the audience.

Even more awkward.

It's a recipe for comedic success, and local audiences can't get enough of this pair. "She's half my act," Corvino confirms. "The better half."

Raynor and Corvino are probably best recognized for their work as stand-up comedians, but they met in their other roles: as actors. TheatreNOW, the dinner theater space on Dock Street, had just opened and they were both cast in the inaugural show. Corvino blends his classic Italian heritage with an introspective, gentle nature and a physical goofiness that is infectious. "I saw him at call back auditions, and I said to myself, 'He better get cast, he is so funny,'" Beth recalls. "At the first read-through he was the only person I didn't know — "

"And most everyone thought I was gay," Anthony interrupts. He finally asked her out after opening night.

"I told myself that he didn't really like me, it was just coincidence . . . we just talked and it was so easy," Raynor laughs. "Then he kissed me!"

Rising to defend himself, Corvino interjects, "She was trying to get me into the sack. I am not that type of man. I need to wait."

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

Raynor giggles and blushes. "I think it took about a week [to clarify the relationship] — he wouldn't ask me to be his girlfriend. I think he was trying to needle at me. He's a teacher, so he knows how to ask leading questions."

"I choose the Socratic method in my approach to dating. Would you want to date me?" Corvino grins at Raynor. "And we were both sober at the time, so we knew it had to stick."

Though Corvino was over the moon about Raynor's place in his life, and things were moving along with his acting career, his first passion was floundering: his stand-up comedy work. He sighs looking back on it. "I was thinking, 'I'm struggling right now. I can't get a laugh.' I'm trying to figure out who I am. If I'm going to go up and bomb, then she's going to have to learn to do this, too." Raynor would come see him perform and be as supportive as she could, but it wasn't enough. "I was going to have to quit soon." Corvino explains that, in an act of desperation, he signed her up for open mic one night. "So that I would get better."

Raynor was mortified. In retaliation, she did a solid four-minute set poking fun at him.

"Beth got the biggest laughs that evening," says Corvino. "It just made my uphill battle that much worse." Or so he thought. Until they found a groove working off each other back to back on stage. They both spend a lot of time writing for their acts and working on it.

"When I started out, I was told it would take two years to have six minutes of good material," Corvino points out. "It's tough, you've got to see what works in front of an audience." He also points out that at open mic you might see nine comedians with cat jokes "because it's relatable. You start with a cat idea, then eventually you find a way to bring in lasers — how much further can I take it?"

Both are focused right now writing new material and tightening up what they have. The Cape Fear Comedy Festival has started accepting submissions. "It's the World Series of comedy right now," Corvino explains. For both, it is a good networking event to check in with other comics, see what people are working on and find out about what's going on venue-wise in other places. The pair hopes to move to New York in the next five years, so events like this are fertile training ground for that big leap.

Though both are talented, together they have something stronger than they do apart.

Gwenyfar Rohler fell in love with theater at Thalian Hall on her sixth birthday. She spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

Pomegranate Books

Resources for a Fruitful Life

Feb 6th at 7:00pm

New York Times bestselling author

Wiley Cash

joins us with his newly released novel

this dark road to mercy

4418 Park Ave
Wilmington NC 28403
910.452.1107
www.pombooks.net

WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THAT PERFECT WATERFRONT HOME, YOU NEED AN AGENT WHO'S NOT JUST GETTING HIS FEET WET.

As a native son of the area, Broker/Realtor, Lee Crouch has been exploring the unique surroundings of Wilmington, Wrightsville Beach and the Intracoastal Waterway since childhood. For 26 years, he has put that local knowledge into listing, marketing and selling beach and waterfront properties. Lee has built his reputation on a lifetime of experience and years of customer satisfaction.

110 Skystasail Drive
Walter Sprunt Home - Shandy Point - circa 1920
"Greenville Manor"
$1,695,000

101 Edgewater Lane
Gorgeous Home with boat slip.
Edgewater
$1,350,000

6400 Westport Drive
Wilmington
Fabulous custom traditional home
Boat slip in protected marina
$995,000

316 Beach Road North
Figure Eight island
Ocean Front, open floor plan, private lot
$2,295,000

Intracoastal
INTRACOASTALREALTY.COM

Lee Crouch as a young boy preparing for a sailboat race. Wrightsville Beach, circa 1968

BROKER 25 Years REALTOR

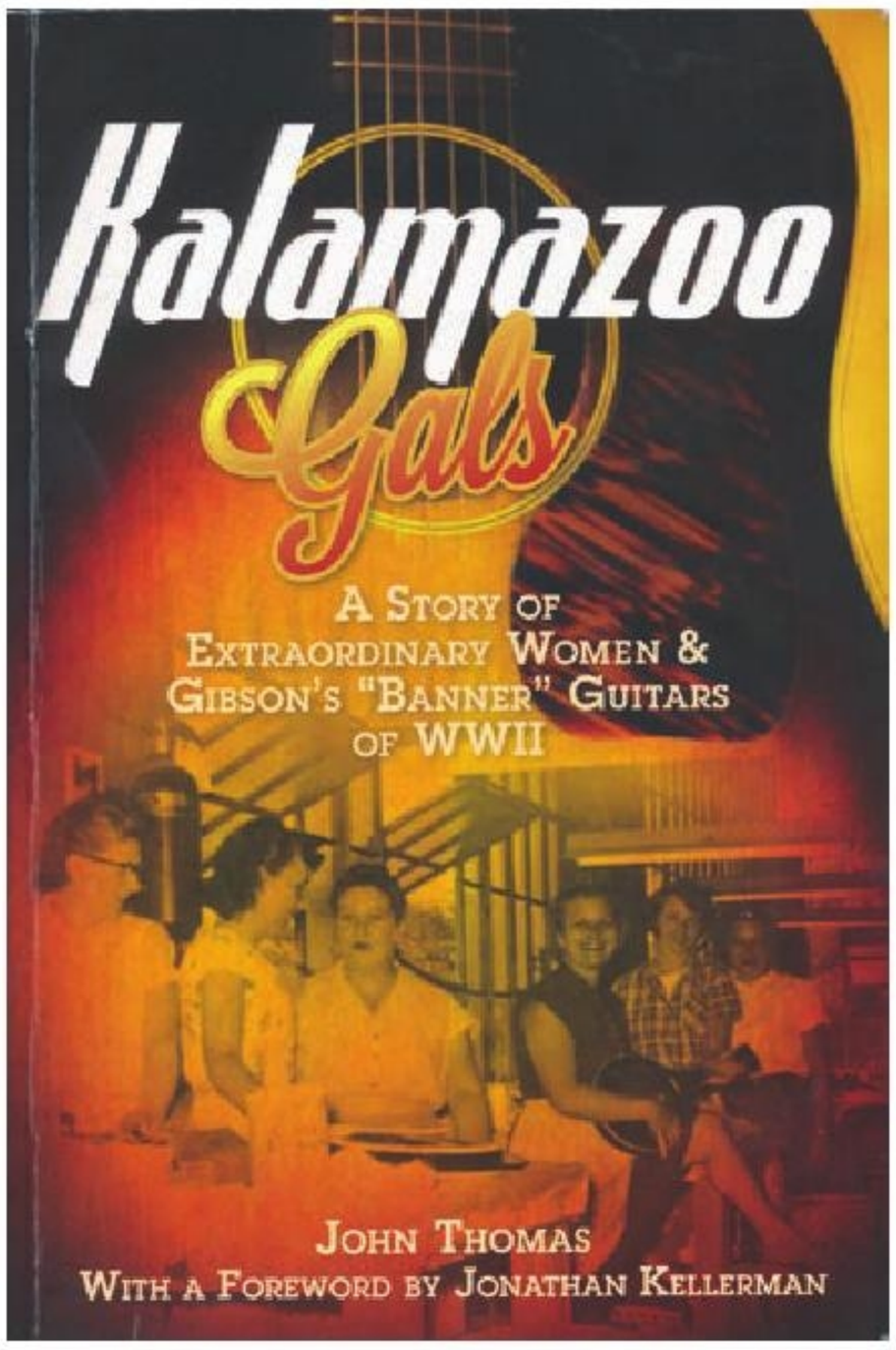
LEE CROUCH
Waterfront Specialist

523 Causeway Drive, Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina 28480

www.leecrouch.com 800.533.1840 or 910.512.4533 *leecrouch@intracoastalrealty.com*

Strings Attached

How a legendary guitar company duped the War Production Board and a small army of female workers called Kalamazoo Gals made 25,000 banner instruments


Kalamazoo
Gals
A Story of Extraordinary Women & Gibson's "Banner" Guitars of WWII
John Thomas
With a Foreword by Jonathan Kellerman

By Stephen E. Smith

A curmudgeonly friend of mine is fond of saying, "You can go almost anywhere and there'll be an [expletive deleted] with a guitar." He's right, at least about the guitar part. The *American Fretted Musical Instrument Makers* website, which is by no means a complete listing, identifies more than 1,800 American manufacturers that produced fretted instruments during the last 150 years (that's a lot of stringed instruments stuffed under a lot of beds), so any book about guitars is a book about us. And John Thomas's thoroughly researched *The Kalamazoo Gals* is surely an American tale, the convergence of big business, government and labor relations, all of it sweetened with a generous dose of sentiment.

The Gibson Guitar Corporation, founded in 1902 in Kalamazoo, Michigan (now located in Nashville, Tennessee), is almost as storied as the C.F. Martin Guitars, and the company has produced five of the ten most valuable collectable stringed instruments. At the height of the guitar bubble, a 1958–60 Les Paul could bring as much as $300,000, and among the thousands of collectible Gibson guitars, its "banner" models, all of which were produced during World War II, are much sought after (a banner Gibson features the usual Gibson logo at the top of headstock, but centered below the logo is a decal that reads "Only a Gibson is Good Enough," a mysterious and slightly convoluted assertion).

Thomas focuses on the circumstances surrounding the female work force whose tenure with the company came and went with World War II. Gibson, like most American manufacturers, was required to contribute to the war effort, so management hired a female labor force drawn from the Kalamazoo area, and without much training, they were put to work producing guitars and winding strings.

Oddly enough, company histories state emphatically that no guitars, other than those already on order, were produced during the war, a hoax that was foisted on the War Production Board and perpetuated by the company's personnel director, Julius Bellson, who claimed in his 1973 history *The Gibson* that the war "forced us to stop the manufacture of musical instruments." Thomas researched Gibson's ledgers and discovered that the company shipped almost 25,000 instruments from the beginning of 1942 through 1945, an astounding amount of non-military goods for a company that claimed to have produced none. All of the guitars shipped by Gibson during the period were banner guitars.

As for the vague wording on the headstock, Gibson may have been offering a corporate apothegm, a rationalization for producing instruments that were not up to prewar standards. Moreover, the employment of an unskilled female work force — the Kalamazoo gals — may have been perceived as disadvantageous to the crafting of quality guitars. Whatever their reasoning, the slogan inspired the Epiphone Company to concoct its own advertising maxim: "When Good Enough Isn't Good Enough."

If Gibson's management assumed its wartime instruments were in some way inferior — in addition to the female work force, there was a shortage of quality woods, and metal for tuners and truss rods was in short supply — the opposite has turned out to be true among the Gibson connoisseurs. Banner Gibsons are much sought after, and a 1943 maple banner J-45 in excellent condition might fetch $12,000. Moreover, there are those Gibson collectors who staunchly maintain that the tonal qualities of banner guitars are superior to the pre- and postwar models.

In addition to searching Gibson's records, Thomas interviewed

surviving female employees who worked at the Kalamazoo plant from 1941 to 1945, seeking details unavailable in written sources: What was the culture at the Gibson plant? With what tasks were the female employees entrusted? What training did they receive? What memories did they have of working for Gibson? Did the male luthiers do most of the detailed construction work? Did the women see themselves as having created *objets de vertu*?

Thomas's inquiries met with varying success. In the intervening years, an innate human reticence and the self-effacing attitude prevalent among informants limited the collection of useful information, and the reader may wonder if Thomas will ever discover the secret to the construction of the banner guitars. But he does, finally, eke out a feasible explanation, albeit a trifle obvious, that will satisfy the reader's curiosity. More importantly, the reader comes to know and appreciate the women who helped craft some of the finest stringed instruments of the last century.

Thomas also traces the history of a few of the banner guitars and notes that the first LG-3 was shipped on August 20, 1942, to "Pendleton's Music and Furniture Store in Sanborn, North Carolina." Tar Heel readers will wonder if Sanborn is a misspelling of Sanford, since no Sanborn has ever been listed among North Carolina place names.

Apparently, Gibson's disdain for federal law didn't end with the dissolution of the War Production Board. In 2011 — about the time *The Kalamazoo Gals* went to print — federal agents converged on two Gibson factories and seized illegally procured wood, an act of government intrusion that became an instant *cause celebre* for conservative media. In August 2012, the Justice Department reached a criminal enforcement "understanding" with Gibson for violating a federal law that makes it illegal to import plant products, in Gibson's case Madagascar ebony for fingerboards, in violation of another country's laws. While the case was being settled, Henry Juszkiewicz, the CEO of Gibson Guitars, hit the talk show circuit and insisted that "the Obama Justice Department wants us to just shut our doors and go away," and he vowed to continue to fight for the Gibson and its workers. It seems unlikely that the corporate culture that duped the War Production Board in the early '40s was still in force when Gibson hoarded the illegal ebony, but this much is certain: What went 'round came 'round, even if it took 70 years.

Stephen E. Smith's most recent book of poems is A Short Report on the Fire at Woolworths. *He can be reached at travisses@hotmail.com.*

Thalian Hall
CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, INC
2013-2014 MAIN ATTRACTIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS
Jimmy WEBB
FEBRUARY 27 AT 8PM
GRAMMY-WINNING SINGER, SONGWRITER, COMPOSER.
NEW YORK VOICES
MARCH 8 AT 7PM
25th Anniversary
GRAMMY-WINNING JAZZ VOCAL QUARTET
THE CELTIC TENORS
MARCH 14 A 8PM
CLASSICAL ROOTS WITH A CONTEMPORARY EDGE
Tickets: 910.632.2285 • 800.523.2820 • www.ThalianHall.org • 310 Chestnut St • Wilmington, NC 28401

Opulence Of Southern Pines

at The Mews, 280 NW Broad Street, Downtown Southern Pines, NC, 910.692.2744
at Cameron Village, 400 Daniels Street, Raleigh, NC, 919.467.1781
www.OpulenceOfSouthernPines.com

Serving the Carolinas & More for 18 Years ~ Financing Available

DUXIANA®
ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY IN SLEEPING
DUXIANA.COM

ARE YOU SLEEPING
LESS BECAUSE YOU'VE
GOTTEN OLDER?
OR BECAUSE YOUR
MATTRESS HAS?
An ordinary mattress lasts about seven years. So if yours is over ten years old, it's probably on its deathbed. Why not replace it with a DUX® Bed? We have four times as many springs as a normal mattress. Which not only helps you sleep better, it helps you sleep longer. An hour longer, according to independent research.
DUXIANA®
IT'S TIME TO REPLACE
YOUR MATTRESS.

N.C. WRITER'S Notebook

By Sandra Redding

Words, words, words . . .

Chisel them; hammer them; stack them. Kaleidoscopic in color or Quaker gray, they become forms to touch, taste, bite into, love. —Anonymous

February is for reading books by the fireplace. The following comfy North Carolina bookshops have one-upped Kindles and audio books by hosting authors in the flesh signing their books. Meet a writer. Be inspired. Buy a book!

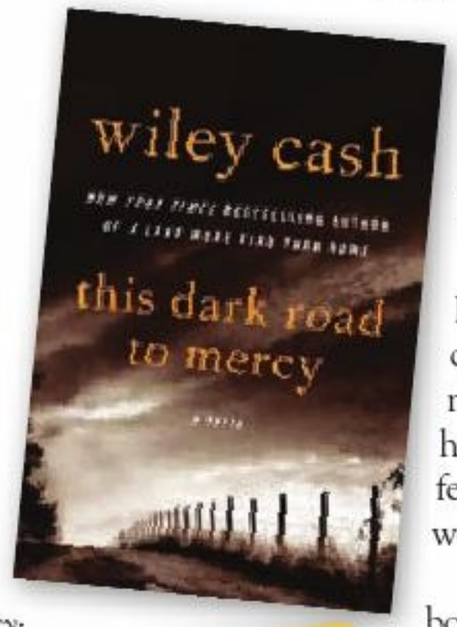
Flyleaf Books, Chapel Hill, www.flyleafbooks.com
February 2, 11 a.m. — Wendy Webb's *The Vanishing*; February 2, 4 p.m. — Wiley Cash's *ThisDark Road to Mercy*; February 6, 7 p.m. — Phillip Meyer's *The Sun*

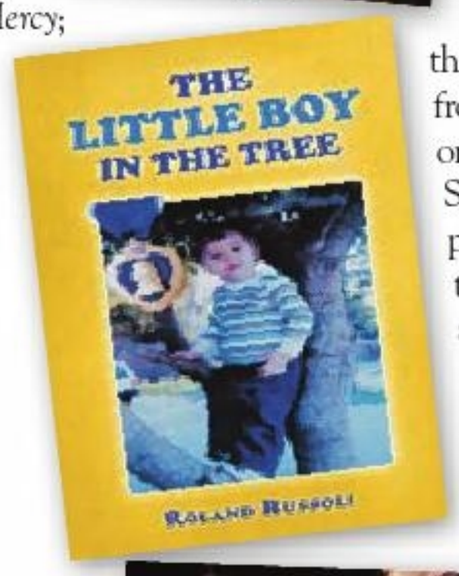
Barnes & Noble, Greensboro, store-locator.barnesandnoble.com
February 11, 7 p.m. — Angie Kratzer's *David Webb: The American Jeweler*; February 20, 7 p.m. — Rob Bencini's *Pardon the Disruption*

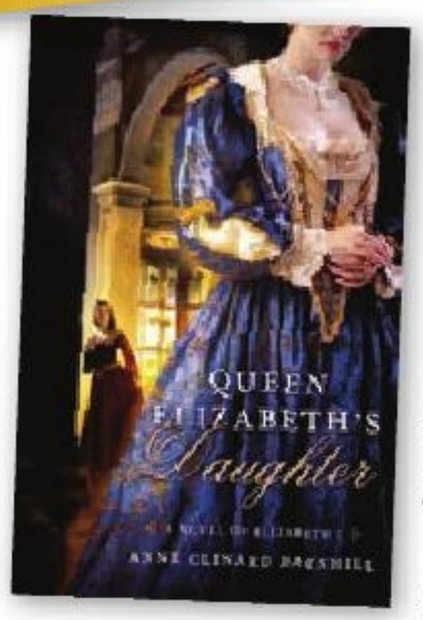
The Next Chapter, New Bern, www.thenextchapternc.com
February 1, Noon: Flora Ann Scearce's *The Village: Search for Answers in a Cotton Mill Town*

The Country Bookshop, Southern Pines, www.thecountrybookshop.biz
February 7, 5 p.m. — Wiley Cash's *This Dark Road to Mercy*; February 11, 5 p.m. — Ed Williams' *Liberating Dixie*; February 13, 5 p.m. — Barbara Claypool White's *The In-Between Hour*; February 17, 4:30 p.m. — Kayla Williams' *Plenty of Time When We Get Home: Love and Recovery in the Aftermath of War*

Pomegranate Books, Wilmington, www.pombooks.net
February 6, 7 p.m. — Wiley Cash's *This Dark Road to Mercy*







Author Buzz

· Advised to write about home by Ernest J. Gaines, admired humanitarian and author of *A Lesson Before Dying*, Wiley Cash sets his fiction in Gastonia. His first novel was a *New York Times* best-seller. His second, *This Dark Road to Mercy*, is a mesmerizing Southern Gothic. Novelist Jill McCorkle's take? "A time capsule and at times an edgy thriller, but at its fine emotional center, it's all about what it means to be a father."

· Roland Russoli of Greensboro has recently published *The Little Boy in the Tree*. A Vietnam vet and former Peace Corps volunteer, Russoli writes, "On October 20th, 2005, my world crashed down around me," in this gripping account of his own life after the death of his son.

· Anne Barnhill of Supply, who dresses in Tudor regalia on book tours, reports that her second Tudor novel, *Queen Elizabeth's Daughter: A Novel of Elizabeth I*, will debut in March.

Words of Wisdom

As a creative writing teacher, my chief job is to brainwash students not with edicts, but with questions, to nag them into second-guessing themselves at every turn. To plant in them a pervasive neurosis – so they'll return habitually to make sure the door is locked, the burners are OFF, the dog's water dish is full. A repertoire of craft questions they can bombard themselves with once I and the workshop disappear, when the writerly waters of solitude clap shut over them. Writers must develop into their own inquisitors. A hard head is requisite and a dead aim for spitting in the eye of those who say you're a fool for writing.
— Joseph Bathanti, North Carolina Poet Laureate and professor at Appalachian State University

Dates to Remember

February 1, National Freedom Day, commemorates Abraham Lincoln signing a resolution prohibiting slavery. The word lover once confessed, "My best friend is a person who will give me a book I have not read." (Another Aquarius-born freedom fighter, Susan B. Anthony, humorously praised the liberating effects of bicycling: "It gives women a feeling of freedom and self-reliance. I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride on a wheel.")

February 2, Groundhog Day. Or not? Get excited about groundhogs? If bored with the mammal's predictive shadow, use the day to write about something that matters, advocates Dr. Shelby Stephenson, affable poet/musician from Johnston County. He has written of dead mules, hogs, tractors and a book on the *Possum* (opossum to city slickers). "I'm trying to give back to the possum," Stephenson often explained, "something we took away by hunting and eating it when I was growing up."

February 14, Valentine's Day. Take a cue from Maya Angelou, Winston-Salem's revered author, and write poems celebrating those you most respect. Angelou wrote the poem "His Day is Done" in tribute to Nelson Mandela, who died last December. Writer's block? Chocolate is never a cliché.

Contest News

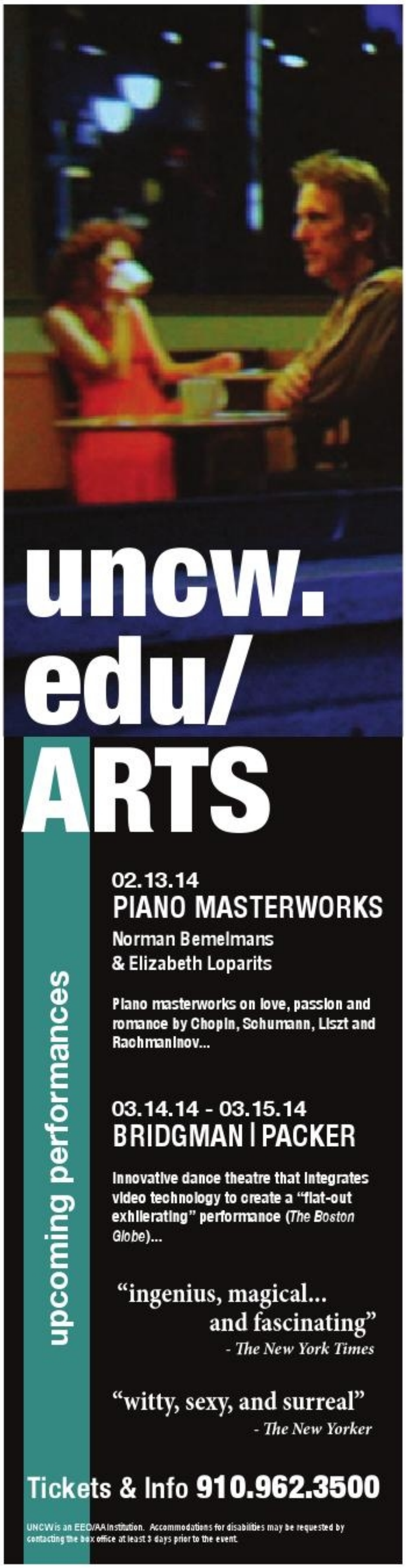
Consider two competitions endorsed by North Carolina Writers' Network. The Doris Betts Fiction Prize honors Chapel Hill's esteemed creative writing teacher. Deadline, February 15, with a $250 first place. The Randall Jarrell Poetry Prize honors the renowned poet and professor at Woman's College, now UNCG. Deadline, March 1. The award: $200 and publication in *storysouth*. ncwriters.org

The Burlington Writers Club 2014 award — dealine, March 8 — accepts entries from writers in Alamance, Caswell, Chatham, Durham, Guilford, Orange, Randolph and Rockingham counties. Info: Send an SASE to Doris Caruso, 3015 Winston Drive, #110, Burlington, NC, 27215 or www.burlingtonwritersclub.org

---

What do you want on this page? What writerly events are taking place in your neck of the woods? Let me know at sanredd@earthlink.net

Greensboro writer Sandra Redding's first novel, Naomi Wise: A Cautionary Tale, *has just been published.*



uncw.
edu/
ARTS

upcoming performances

02.13.14
PIANO MASTERWORKS
Norman Bemelmans
& Elizabeth Loparits

Piano masterworks on love, passion and romance by Chopin, Schumann, Liszt and Rachmaninov...

03.14.14 - 03.15.14
BRIDGMAN | PACKER

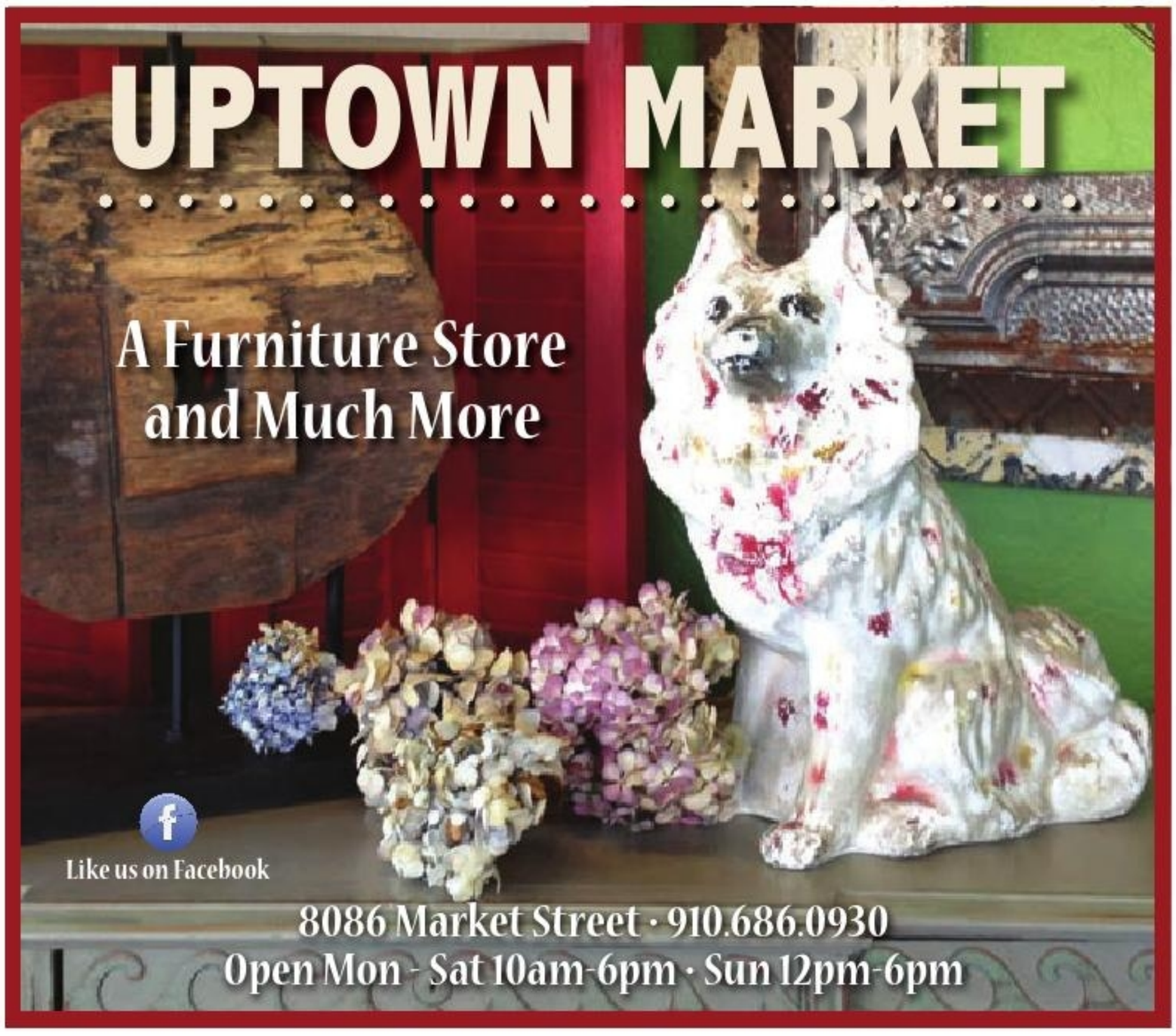
Innovative dance theatre that integrates video technology to create a "flat-out exhilerating" performance (*The Boston Globe*)...

"ingenius, magical... and fascinating"
- The New York Times

"witty, sexy, and surreal"
- The New Yorker

Tickets & Info **910.962.3500**

UNCW is an EEO/AA institution. Accommodations for disabilities may be requested by contacting the box office at least 3 days prior to the event.


UPTOWN MARKET
A Furniture Store
and Much More
Like us on Facebook
8086 Market Street · 910.686.0930
Open Mon - Sat 10am-6pm · Sun 12pm-6pm

Snap Judgment

How a simple jar of clothespins – missing in action – nearly put me over the edge

By Ann Ipock

When was the last time you "snapped"? Oh, call it what you want; cracked, lost it, had a meltdown? And was it because of something major? Maybe you got locked out of your house? Lost your wallet? Drove smack into the back of a car? Life ain't easy, folks, and if you say these things never happen to you, then you're either in denial, living in a monastery, or taking weekly vacations to the Caribbean. No, wait! Flying *anywhere* these days has its own host of problems: weather delays, pilot errors, baggage fees, crying babies and stinky feet (remember John Candy in *Planes, Trains and Automobiles?*).

A week ago, in my kitchen, I snapped, not because of anything major – I didn't slip on a banana peel or set the oven on fire. Rather, it was because of a common, inanimate, everyday object – two short pieces of slender wood connected in the middle by a metal clasp. Y'all, I went postal over a clothespin – or, I should say, the lack thereof. Though it wasn't the clothespin *itself* that made me bonkers, it was the frustration of having gone through the same situation not two weeks earlier. At that time, I spent hours organizing my pantry, placing a dozen or so clothespins in a clear Ball jar, at the edge of the shelf for future easy access. I was bound and determined this would *not* happen again!

I've heard people say it's not the big things in life that'll push us over the edge, but the small things. The day-to-day minutiae. I believe it. And so it was that evening when Russell, trying to seal a bag of newly opened potato chips, caused me to go ballistic. Rummaging around in the pantry, obviously aggravated, he said to me, "I can never find anything I want in this kitchen and it's because of all the *junk*!" I said, "What are you looking for?" He replied, "A clothespin!" Uh-oh! That made me jump up from my cozy chair, throw my book up in the air, stomp into the kitchen and begin a tirade. Looking back, it was if an unknown or unseen force took possession of my body. I scared Russell half to death. I may as well have grown horns.

My voice, deep and resounding, roared: "Thaaaaaaat's it! I've had it! Where *are* those clothespins? I put a bunch of 'em in a jar *right here*, so that we'd never lose them again!" A sideways glance from me showed Russell's fear – his eyes got wide and his mouth fell open. I didn't wait for his response.

I grabbed the pantry knob and flung open the door. A quick glimpse showed no jar of clothespins, so I tore into the pantry. I began tossing bags and boxes of expired snacks into the trash. "Old! Out it goes!" I grumbled through clenched teeth. I poured out the small contents of one box of cereal into another box, combining the two. "There!" I said, in a menacing voice, to no one in particular. I saw a box of totally opened, totally stale crackers with *no* clothespin and said, "Ugh! Who did that?" In just a few minutes, I'd cleaned out all four shelves. Not a clothespin in sight. I sighed. I looked away, in disgust.

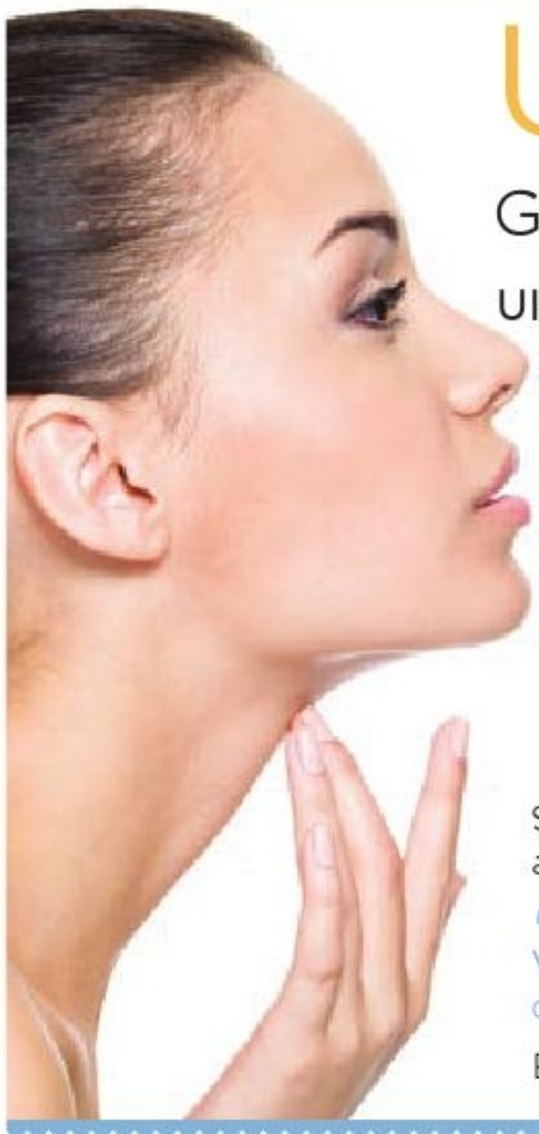
Russell muttered, "Never mind," carefully stepping away from me, but not turning his back. Was he afraid? Was I really that scary? That's when I realized he'd stood there frozen all that time. He finally mustered up the nerve to say, "What just happened? Are you all right? You snapped!"

He said "snapped" since he used to watch the docudrama TV show *Snapped* the one that portrays women who have committed or attempted murder because they really did snap! Of course, I *didn't* snap, but I did eventually get over myself and settle down. No harm done, so to speak.

Now it's our private joke, a secret code of sorts. When one of us is exasperated, angry or just plain cranky, our secret word is "clothespin." Except now, instead of being mad, we just laugh.

And by the way, Russell eventually found the errant jar of clothespins. He would never admit it, but I'm sure he placed them in a cabinet two feet away, right there with the spices.

Ann Ipock is an award-winning Southern author, humorist and speaker whose books include the Life is Short *series. She may be reached at amipock@ec.rr.com.*



Ultherapy®

SEE THE BEAUTY OF SOUND™

Get back the neck you knew.

Ultherapy®—the only FDA-approved, non-invasive neck lift—tightens loose skin on the face and neck.

- Single ultrasound treatment
- No surgery, no downtime
- Gradual, natural, yet noticeable results

Before After

Voluma replenishes lost skin volume to regain a youthful curve to the cheeks and can be used to enhance the overall shape of your face. **Voluma** is an injectable hyaluronic acid volumiser that adds fullness to areas that need a little more support or enhancement. Shortly after treatment with **Voluma**, you should notice that your facial contours appear fuller and rounder, giving your face a softer, more youthful appearance.

"Based on my 25 years of study and experience in facial volume enhancement, I believe Voluma provides a natural, subtle, yet powerful rejuvenation for patients. I like the alternative of using a natural skin element that is long lasting"

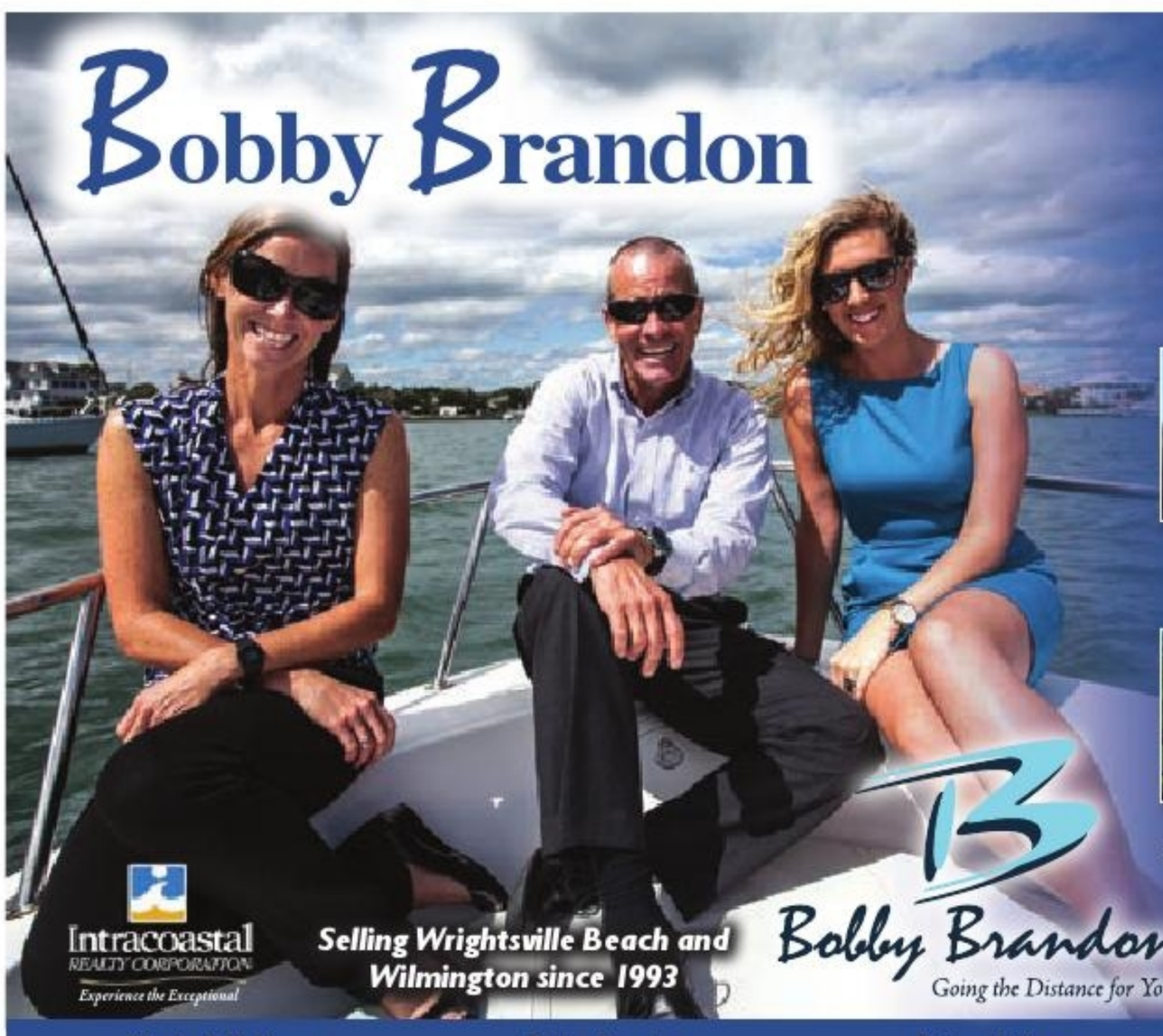
Edward Ricciardelli, MD - Board Certified Plastic Surgeon & Facial Volume Enhancer for over 20 years

SUMMIT Plastic Surgery & Dermatology

58 Physicians Drive, Suite 103
Supply, NC 28462
910.755.5015

1717 Shipyard Blvd, Suite 100
Wilmington, NC 28403-8019
910.794.5355

Bobby Brandon



15 Bermuda Drive • Recently remodeled • Exceptional quality & detail **$1,889,000**
Wrightsville Beach

3 Palmetto Drive • 4 BR/3 BA
$648,000 Wrightsville Beach
Parmele Island Neighborhood

202 Lees Cut Lane • w/Boat Slip
$529,000
Wrightsville Beach

152 Driftwood Court • w/Boat Slip
$448,000 Channel Walk
Wrightsville Beach

1057 Headwater Cove Lane
Bradley Creek Views **$309,000**

8817 Ramsbury Way • 5 Bedrooms
Plantation Landing • **$447,000**

618 Swann Street • Investment Property **$59,000** Downtown

224 Water Street #2F **$238,000**
Downtown Riverfront

4559 Exuma Lane **$128,000**
Saylor's Watch

Intracoastal Realty Corporation
Experience the Exceptional

Selling Wrightsville Beach and Wilmington since 1993

Bobby Brandon
Going the Distance for You

Elisabeth Mulligan
(910) 262-1405
elisabeth@intracoastalrealty.com

Bobby Brandon
(910) 538-6261
bobbyb@intracoastalrealty.com

Rainey Wallace
(252) 230-8523
rwallace@intracoastalrealty.com

Check out Bobby's local videos at www.BobbyBrandon.com

A Healthy Bouquet

A wry twist on the classic gimlet

By Frank Daniels III

Bartenders spend a lot of time whipping up fancy cocktail menus to entice us to try new liqueurs and spend a bit more money. It is generally a treat to taste what they have invented, but most of what they concoct is not replicable at home (these cocktails should come with a warning label: Professionals only at a supervised bar, do NOT try at home!).

Which is one reason why I tend to stick with classic cocktails and invest my effort in finding artisanal ingredients that add a twist, and fun, to the generally simpler drinks. And if you think about the cocktails you order, or make time and again, they are variations of each other using either dry or sweet vermouth, lime juice or lemon juice.

The daiquiri, margarita and gimlet are perfect examples: a spirit (rum, tequila and gin,) lime juice, and a sweetener (sugar, triple sec, and sugar). The basic recipe is so good, tart and sweet, with a nice smooth kick, that it supports experimentation, giving the amateur mixologist the foundation to sparkle.

Most recently I was experimenting with the gimlet, a classic cocktail that is generally abused by the use of Rose's Lime Juice. I love the story of Rose's, a method developed by Scotsman Lachlan Rose to preserve lime juice that quickly became a commercial hit because of the British Navy requirement for a daily ration of lime juice to ward off the impact of scurvy (the lack of vitamin C in your diet). But the processed lime juice and extra sugar in Rose's makes for a sorry gimlet, which is best made with fresh squeezed lime juice and a bit of simple syrup. And with the modern market, we can have fresh lime juice all year round to ward off scurvy instead of worrying about keeping preserved lime juice on the bar.

As with the daiquiri or the margarita, the gimlet lends itself to substitutes for the sweetener in the cocktail. Recent experimentation resulted in a fun, floral and very feminine version of the gimlet that has become a hit. St. Germain elderflower liqueur turned out to be an excellent addition to the gimlet, amplifying the botanical notes of the crisp gin with its floral bouquet, and making the cocktail a bit sweeter than the original. Adding to the popularity was serving it in a variety of cocktail glasses that we have picked up at the local consignment store.

Keeping with the scurvy theme, I like to use Plymouth Gin from the famous English port city. In this cocktail its more subdued botanicals are a bonus. I don't usually shake gin, but I like the frothy nature of this cocktail when shaken instead of stirred.

Enjoy.

Gimlet d'Fleur

2 oz Gin (Plymouth)
1 oz Fresh squeezed lime juice
1/2 oz St. Germain elderflower liqueur
Lime twist

Chill your fancy cocktail glasses with ice and a bit of St. Germain (I like to use the ice from chilling the glasses in the cocktail shaker; just remember to pour off the water and St. Germain before mixing the drink).

In an ice-filled cocktail shaker mix the gin, lime juice and St. Germain. Shake vigorously and strain into the chilled glasses.

Garnish with a lime twist.

Frank Daniels III is an editor and writer living in Nashville, Tennessee, who frequently visits Wilmington. His cocktail book is Frank's Little Black Bar Book, *Wakestone Press. Contact him at fdanielsiii@mac.com.*

Dressed to the Nine

The secret to beautiful faces and garlicky herb fries so aromatic they could be marketed as perfume

By Dana Sachs

Here's something about Hollywood that you may not know. When you see the actress Jennifer Lawrence in *American Hustle*, or Sandra Bullock in *Gravity*, or Sofía Vergara in *Modern Family*, they're wearing something called the Beauty Formula. That's a term that makeup artists use to describe the particular process of applying cosmetics that translates into "a flawless complexion, no imperfections, a symmetrical-looking face, no shadows under the eyes, no blemishes," says Barbara Jurasik, who, as a makeup artist herself, has worked on some of the most beautiful and famous faces in show business. The Beauty Formula transforms naturally pretty people — let's face it, these people are almost always naturally pretty — into the ingénues and leading ladies we see on the screen.

Barbara Jurasik carries a lot of that glamour herself. With creamy skin, vivid blue eyes and a penchant for words like "Honey" and "Darling," she brought Hollywood with her when we met for lunch at Nine downtown.

She was also game to fulfill her role as my fellow restaurant critic, though she did have some hesitation. "I love food, but I'm not a foodie," she told me, looking over a menu that combined breakfast dishes like omelettes and chicken biscuits with lunch items like oyster po-boys and grilled cheese sandwiches (Nine serves dinner, too). "People talk to me about how, if they won the lottery, they'd build these fabulous kitchens. If I win the lottery, I'm getting a private chef."

Barbara grew up in Bellflower, California, the kind of place that inspires the classic American dream of finding something bigger and better in life. As a high school student, she won the California State Roller Skating Championship, which led to a stint in finishing school and, after that, training in cosmetology. For a while, she worked at the cosmetics counter in a department store, which was easy.

"I'm a real sales person," she explained. "I can sell ice, Darling, to Eskimos."

But she wanted more. It was the early 1970s, and, though Hollywood makeup artists were almost all men — "their makeup boxes were grubby and they all smoked cigarettes," as she remembers it — the Makeup Artists and Hairstylists Union, Local 706, which was making an effort to expand its membership of women, signed Barbara up. By the time she was 20, she was Raquel Welch's personal makeup artist, following the star on a world tour that took them to Paris, Madrid, Rio, Buenos Aires and many other places. In Cincinnati, the girl from Bellflower saw snow falling for the first time.

The tour with Welch also provided the perfect education. "Raquel was the consummate pro who really understood the business," Barbara said. "She taught me a lot, and it's from her that I learned the very particular formula for beauty makeup."

After her stint with Welch, Barbara worked extensively in television and film, doing makeup for Clint Eastwood, Al Pacino, Liv Ullmann and Lynn Redgrave, to name a few. When Brian De Palma started making his film *Scarface*, he introduced Barbara to a young actress named Michelle Pfeiffer. "I'm going to make her famous," De Palma said, "so you need to make sure she's beautiful all the time."

Stars weren't always easy. Melanie Griffith, for example, didn't have classically symmetrical features and, to make things more difficult, she didn't take care

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFUIK

of herself. "I was working double time," Barbara told me, describing "a constant challenge to keep her spit and glued together." And she remembered the hard-living country music star George Jones, Jr., as "a real disaster."

An Avocado BLT arrived at our table, the accompanying mountain of garlicky herbed fries so aromatic that the dish should be marketed as perfume. Nine's bakery makes its breads from scratch, so, for the sandwich, chef Nicholas Votel set the dish's star ingredients between two slices of seedy whole grain bread, topping it off with a tangy tomato jam, herb aioli, and a scattering of arugula.

Barbara took a bite. "It's really like a salad on bread," she said. "Delicious."

She appreciated the rest of our meal, too, finding "nothing not to like" in our omelette du jour (that day's was a succulent Greek version, with feta cheese, kalamata olives, and sautéed red onion, tomato, red pepper, and spinach, all flavored with a balsamic vinegar reduction), and she offered special praise for the moistness of the Mediterranean spiced chicken sandwich. "This isn't dry," she said, describing the toll a grill can take on a piece of meat. "It's not overly—" she paused to think of the perfect word—"killed."

If you've heard of Nine, you've probably heard about the doughnuts, made from scratch in a wide (and wild) variety of flavors. Our doughnut selection that day included dark chocolate peppermint, gingerbread, maple bacon (Nine's most popular, believe it or not), the requisite kid-friendly sprinkles, and a raspberry cheesecake that Barbara declared her favorite. Let me just be honest here. We ordered five to "try" between the two of us, but when we finished lunch there was very little left.

Of course, sitting across the table from a makeup pro, I eventually got around to asking for tips. Barbara had them. "I used to tell my ladies that if you want to do some simple beauty makeup, do five things."

So, here they are:

1. Lipstick.

"I did that," I told her.

"You did that. I noticed when I came in."

"Is the color OK?"

"It's good for you, but it disappeared while you were eating. You need something that stays on."

2. Do your eyebrows.

"Ideally, use a pencil for shaping and brow powder for coloring in. They're the hardest thing to do. The makeup ads in magazines will give you a sense of styles."

3. Concealer.

"You take away shadows and imperfections."

4. Blush.

"Everyone improves with a little kiss of color. That creates an aliveness on the skin tone."

5. Smile.

"No one looks more beautiful than when they smile."

Barbara no longer works in Hollywood, but she continues to use her skills in various ways. These days, she sells a makeup product of her own design, Perfect Pencil, a concealer that balances skin color for a more uniform complexion (see Beauty Tip # 3). In the future, she'd like to shift the focus of that business so that profits go to charities supporting girls and women. It's an ambitious idea, but challenge doesn't seem to faze her. "Once you've worked in the film business, once you've dealt with people who are spending 50 million dollars on a movie," she told me, "you can deal with anything."

Eventually, we had to say goodbye, but not before I took the opportunity to satisfy my curiosity on one more makeup-related topic. "What," I wanted to know, "do you think of people permanently tattooing their eyebrows?"

One of those oh-please-not-that-again expressions crossed Barbara's face. Even though we were sitting in a restaurant in Wilmington, Hollywood came right back out again. "Tattooing? Your face? Darling. *Nightmares*."

For more information on Perfect Pencil, email Barbara at perfectpencilco@aol.com. Nine, at 9 South Front Street, serves breakfast and lunch every day and dinner Monday through Saturday. For information or reservations, call (910) 523-5913 or visit 9bakeryandlounge.com.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

Celeb Spotting

Yes, that's who you think it is . . . just be cool

By Jason Frye

It goes like this:

FADE IN: INT. BLUE POST – NIGHT

The ghosts of 1,000 cigarettes haunt the rails and rafters of the Blue Post. In one corner, a pool table; in another, darts. A bar dominates one wall, there, a handful of patrons nurse drinks. DAVID BOWIE plays on the jukebox.

No one turns when the YOUNG POET – appropriate poet beard brushing his chest, his eyes wide and wild from lack of sleep or the fury of poetry within, we aren't sure – enters.

He scans the room. Doesn't recognize anyone. He's not surprised, he's new here.

Taking a seat at one corner of the bar, he spies a familiar face. He studies the MAN for a moment, orders a Guinness, studies the man some more. After a sip or two, he's built up the courage to speak to the stranger.

POET

Excuse me, uh, Mr. Hopper?

DENNIS HOPPER looks up from his glass.

DENNIS HOPPER

Yeah?

The POET is dumbfounded.

POET

I'm new in town and I'm surprised to see you out. I loved you in *Blue Velvet* and *Easy Rider* and *Apocalypse Now* . . .

HOPPER

Thanks. You'll like it here.

Hopper looks out across the bar. It's clear he wants to be left alone. Starstruck, the POET returns to his stool, drinks his Guinness.

FADE OUT.

It plays out like this a hundred times a year, maybe a thousand, maybe more. Some celebrity is out at some bar or restaurant and someone recognizes them. Whispers build into a wave and the patrons begin to cut their eyes at the celeb, drinking them in with nervous side-glances.

It's like this unless you're a local or you've been here so long you've adopted their customs. Wilmington has been a film town since a young Drew Barrymore was developing her drinking habit, so the folks around here have seen their fair share of stars of the bright, washed-up and never-will-be varieties.

For the most part, Hollywood likes Wilmington, primarily because we – at least the better part of us – know how to behave. In the words of Jules Winnfield (played by Samuel L. Jackson, who shot *Amos & Andrew* here the year before *Pulp Fiction* made him into an icon for a generation), "Be cool."

Be cool. Good advice. Maybe if someone had been cool, this never would've happened:

FADE IN: INT. FIREBELLY LOUNGE – NIGHT

STEVE BUSCEMI, VINCE VAUGHN and SCOTT ROSENBERG sit in a booth, enjoying round after round of Rolling Rock and a plate of perfect late-night tacos.

A GIRL makes eyes at Vaughn, still hot after *Swingers*. Her BOYFRIEND and his FRIEND are none too happy.

GIRL

(to Vaughn)

You're cute.

VINCE VAUGHN

(chuckles)

Oh yeah?

GIRL

Yeah.

VINCE VAUGHN

Well, why don't you sit down with us? This is Steve and this is Scott. We're here for a movie. You from Wilmington?

The BOYFRIEND fumes and his FRIEND leans in to say something. They scowl in unison and approach the table.

BOYFRIEND

(to Girl)

C'mon, let's go.

VINCE VAUGHN

Not so fast, we were talking.

BOYFRIEND

No you weren't. My girl's ready to go.

C'mon, let's go.

He takes her hand as if to pull her from the table. As STEVE BUSCEMI stands, his lanky frame seems to unfold.

STEVE BUSCEMI

Hey, pal, she's having a conversation.

BOYFRIEND reaches into his pocket, and pulls out a KNIFE.

He slashes at BUSCEMI, stabs, stabs again.

Buscemi's bloodied from cuts on his forehead, jaw, neck and arm.

A FRACAS ensues.

FADE OUT.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

Needless to say, Steve Buscemi is not a fan of Wilmington. Why? Because some people didn't know how to be cool. (Buscemi said in an interview years later that if he hadn't been drinking that night, the situation would've been different.)

Walking through Wilmington for the first time, there's an itch in the back of your mind. It's like déjà vu, but a little slanted — things don't *seem* familiar so much as they *are* familiar. Recognizable storefronts and alleys, apartment buildings, and then you catch a glimpse of someone. Was that Melissa McCarthy, her husband Ben Falcone and their two kids walking out of Kilwins? Is that Joshua Jackson at Elijah's bar? Did I just see that guy who plays Gus Fring? It was and yes and you did.

Most of us remember the when and where and circumstances of a brush with celebrity. For me, it was Hopper at Blue Post. After that, it was the cast of *Dawson's Creek*. Working as a security guard, I kept an eye on locations, sets, extras, talent, you name it. At the bar in what is now Fat Tony's, I had long talks with Joshua Jackson (if I had a clue about *Fringe* our conversation would've been different) and Busy Philipps (to whom I said, "*Freaks and Geeks* was a way better show than *Dawson's Creek*"; she agreed), rode in a van with Katie Holmes (if she calls shotgun, she gets shotgun, no matter what your boss says).

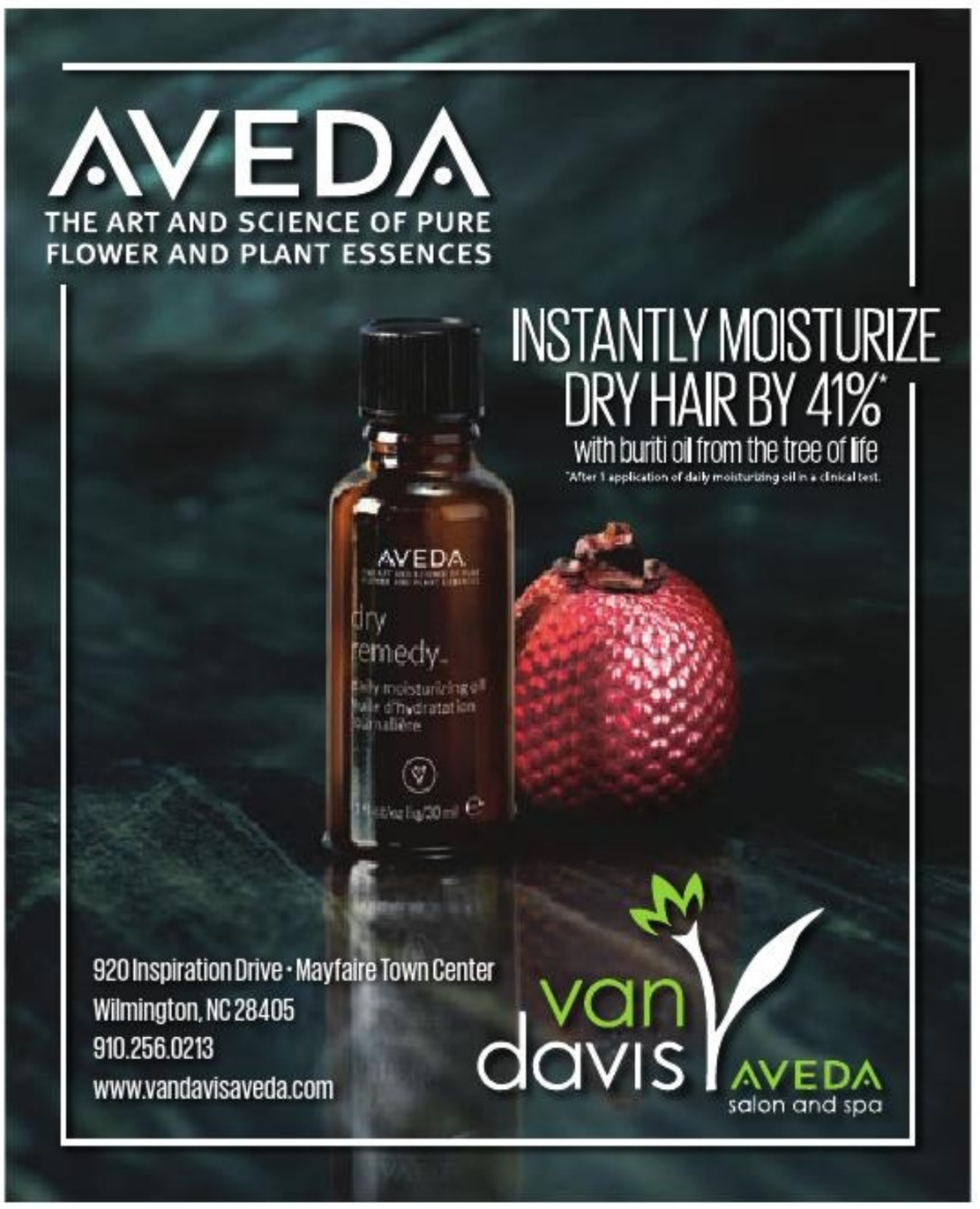
Hell's Kitchen, the Princess Street restaurant and bar, was built for the *Creek*. My job was to guard the set as the set dressers decked it out for the season. They hung posters and panties, fliers and bras, smoked cigarettes, played loud music, and had that place feeling like a dive bar in no time. Later, just before the season wrapped, I was in there and saw Joshua Jackson sitting in a booth with some people I didn't recognize. I waved, he waved back. That was that.

All around town, you can spot celebrities. Take the surfer overheard talking to his friends: "I was riding my bike around The Loop and saw this total smoke wagon. I thought, Dude, that looks like Gwyneth Paltrow, and it was." Or the guy who saw Dean Norris at a Wrightsville Beach dive bar enjoying some local hospitality, as it were.

Robert Downey Jr. at Brasserie du Soleil (with a weird, ornate box of something; I speculated with servers that it contained "spices" for some sort of special celebrity diet or maybe the bones of a beloved pet). Jack Bender, a producer on *LOST* and *Under The Dome* at a Brasserie corner table (I really wanted to tell him how much I thought *LOST* sucked). Big Boi at Walmart. André 3000 at Tidal Creek. David Meunier at Caprice Bistro. They're everywhere. Walking our Loop, eating in our restaurants, trying to read a book in our airport, grabbing a drink at our local watering holes. But it's fine because all of us — locals and stars alike — know how to act. Just be cool.

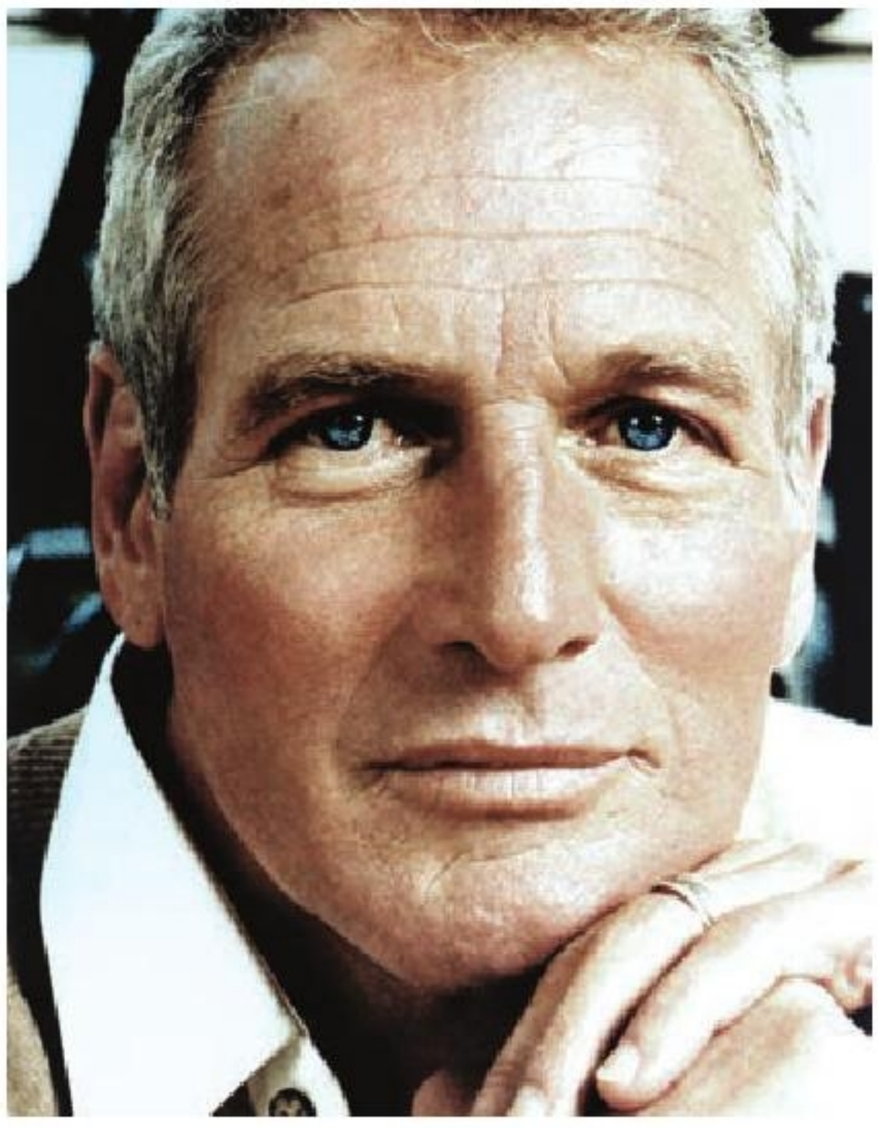
Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of two forthcoming travel guides. He's a barbecue judge, outdoor enthusiast, poet, and lover of all things North Carolina.

palm garden
A Lilly Pulitzer® Signature Store
Mon-Sat 10-9, Sun 12-6
Mayfaire Town Center • 6804 Main Street • Wilmington, NC • 910.256.9984
www.shoppalmgarden.com


AVEDA
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF PURE FLOWER AND PLANT ESSENCES
INSTANTLY MOISTURIZE DRY HAIR BY 41%*
with buriti oil from the tree of life
*After 1 application of daily moisturizing oil in a clinical test.
AVEDA
dry remedy
920 Inspiration Drive · Mayfaire Town Center
Wilmington, NC 28405
910.256.0213
www.vandavisaveda.com
van davis
AVEDA
salon and spa

Chocolate from the Blue-Eyed Stranger

And lovely insights on the Industrial Revolution



By Gwenyfar Rohler

Of course I was seated at one of the window tables so that everyone could see me doing my homework at Cape Fear Coffee and Tea Co. There I was, all 14 years of adolescent pride, feeling very grown-up and uber-sophisticated with my textbooks and college-ruled notebooks scattered in front of me.

After a little while, an older man and a very pretty blonde lady sat down beside me.

"Hi!" I said, holding out my hand and introducing myself. He gave me a funny smile and cocked his head to the side.

"Hi," he said back. After what seemed like an exceptionally long pause, he added, "My name's Paul." He shook my hand and introduced the lady. I think he called her Alessandra, or something like that. At any rate, judging by the way they dressed, they looked like they'd come from the big city. But they seemed nice.

"What are you working on?" Paul asked.

The room had gotten unusually quiet and for some reason everyone, including the counter staff, seemed to be looking in our direction. But they were trying not to look like they were looking.

How odd, I thought, yet I basked in the attention. I took the opportunity to launch into a full-blown lecture on the Industrial Revolution.

Paul and his companion stared at me with rapt attention. When I glanced at the counter, the barista shook her head and laughed before turning away. Paul must have noticed my suddenly faltering confidence because he asked me what the impact of the Industrial Revolution had on America today. Did I see any correlations between the Luddites and their concerns with the jobs lost to automation in factories in the 1980s? What did I think of Byron's speech on behalf of the Luddites? Was there anyone today who seemed to parallel him? We bandied back and forth, and I tried to hold up my end of the conversation and look like the informed one that I was determined to be.

"What're you drinking?" he asked as he pointed at my cup.

Cape Fear Coffee and Tea Co. used to make hot chocolate that was a work of art — rich, creamy, piping hot and topped with a mountain of real whipped cream. It was decadence in a white paper cup. Having had a sweet tooth since birth, I was powerless in the face of such temptation. I enthused about the hot chocolate to them and how much I loved it. Had they tried it? He exchanged a glance with the pretty lady, and she went to the counter to order a hot chocolate. She handed it to me.

"Oh! Thank you!" I gushed. "You didn't need to do that."

"No, we didn't. Enjoy it," he said. The lady looked at her watch and murmured something about getting back. He nodded and stood up.

"Thank you for an enlightening discussion about the Industrial Revolution. I hope you get an A on your paper." He gave me his lopsided grin again and the pretty lady waved goodbye.

When they left it felt like the whole room collectively exhaled.

**

"Did you actually do any homework or did you just hold court?" my mother asked me when I came home. It was, unfortunately, a valid question.

"I had a great conversation about the Industrial Revolution," I told her.

"Did you just discuss the Industrial Revolution, or did you actually write anything?"

I waved my finished paper at her and launched into my newly revised

lecture that now included powerful and insightful correlations with the present day.

"Hm? And who were you discussing the Industrial Revolution with?" she asked skeptically, no doubt picturing the artistic twenty-somethings that habitually hung out there. This did not sound like something I could have picked up from them.

I told her all about my new friends, Paul and — I think her name was Alessandra. She was very pretty and they bought me a hot chocolate and . . .

"And how old would you say this man was?" Mother interrupted, her interrogation voice was turned on.

"I don't know . . . Older. But he had the really pretty blonde lady with him," I offered her as a proof that everything was OK, as if this somehow justified my talking with a worldly-wise stranger.

"'Paul, you said?"

"Yes," I nodded. "And the Alessandra lady. They didn't stay long, they had to get back somewhere. They were too nicely dressed for Wilmington. Big city looking."

There was a long pause that I was scared to interrupt. I held my breath.

"Were his eyes blue? Like really, really blue?" Mother asked carefully.

"Yes. Very blue." I nodded. This was not what I was expecting at all.

"You said he had a funny crooked smile?" She asked. Wheels were clearly turning in her head. This could be bad.

"Yeah, it was nice though."

Mother rummaged through the stack of newspapers on the counter until she found that day's paper. Then, she pointed to a big, color picture of my new friend, Paul. "Is that the man you were talking with?" she demanded in a tone of voice I had never heard her use before.

"Yeah! What's Paul doing in the paper?" I asked, startled by the turn this conversation had taken.

"That's Paul Newman!" My mother exclaimed, her eyes wide as saucers.

"No, it's not," I told her. "Paul Newman is young and blonde and sexy! This guy is old."

"He was in 1968!" she said, shaking her head. "I just don't believe it."

I flashed mentally to the pictures I had seen of my mother's bedroom when she was my age and recalled the life-size poster of Newman as the dreamy Hud Bannon up on the wall.

She fixed me with a laser beam stare. "Paul Newman helped you with your homework?"

I swallowed hard, and had this weird feeling that I had somehow tread too closely to something sacred.

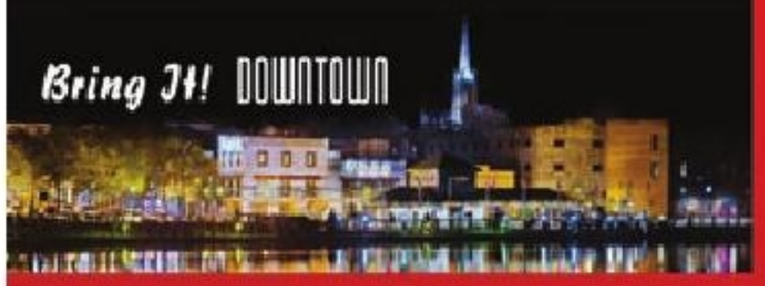
Love how you look ~ Look how you feel
ec02 is a revolutionary, fractional laser treatment designed to renew the skin's surface, giving you a radiant, youthful glow and a feeling of renewed confidence.
• Reduce Acne Scars
• Immediately Improve Texture and Skin Irregularities
• Erase Fine Lines and Wrinkles
• Tightens and Brightens Skin
Call today For your Complimentary Consultation!
glo MEDSPA
(910) 256-2690
www.glomedspa.com

The Fortunate glass

Wine Bar

50 Wines By The Glass
350 Wines By The Bottle
30 Craft Beers

small plates
global cheeses
cured meats
desserts

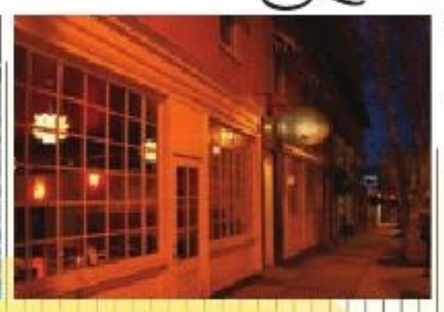


Wine Spectator
AWARD OF EXCELLENCE
2013

FortunateGlassWineBar.com 29 S.Front St. 910-399-4292

Wilmington's favorite Fondue restaurant & bar

the Little Dipper
fondue on front



≪ Serving Dinner Tue-Sun at 5pm ≫
check out our weekly specials online @ www.littledipperfondue.com
Reservations encouraged
available online or over the phone

138 South Front Street ✯ (910) 251-0433 ✯ www.littledipperfondue.com

Occasions...Just Write
Make this
Valentine's Day
the perfect day.

313 N. Front St. Wilmington, NC
In the Cotton Exchange
910.343.9033
occasionsjustwrite.com

Wilmington Art Association

The Premier Visual Arts Organization of the Cape Fear Coast

CALL FOR ARTISTS
Jan 13 - March 3, 2014
32nd Annual Juried Spring Art Show
over $4,000 in cash awards!
Now Accepting 3D & 2D

See our website for details

Cheryl McGraw

Liz Hosier

Harriet M. Forbis

Membership is open to artists & art lovers alike.

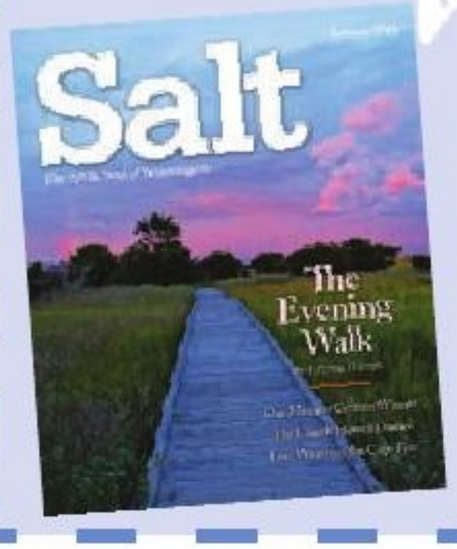
Join Today & Support Local Art
www.wilmingtonart.org

NEVER MISS AN ISSUE!

subscribe today & have

Salt
MAGAZINE

delivered to your home!



Call 910-833-7159
or mail payment to

Salt Magazine
P.O. Box 58,
Southern Pines, NC 28388

$45 In State
$55 Out of State

Homer Alone

For a man who chooses to live by himself in the middle of a swamp, every day is just another day

By Bill Thompson

I found it ironic that as Valentine's Day approached, I met a man who sought to live apart from people, to remove himself from the possibility of sharing his life with anybody, a man for whom Valentine's Day is just another day of the year.

Most of us have reclusive tendencies, or at least moments when we want nothing more than to "get away from it all."

If we have one of those modern jobs with a lot of technological gadgetry or a job that requires a great deal of public contact, we probably feel the urge to retreat from the pressure more often than folks in less chaotic vocations. Sometimes we withdraw by going to some other place like the beach or the mountains. It may be just a short time to be absent from our usual surroundings. But we do come back.

But what about that person who is always "away from it all"? Would we want to be like him?

I thought I might until I met Homer Cashwell. Homer is alone. Really alone. He lives in the middle, or near the middle, of the Great Dismal Swamp on the North Carolina-Virginia border. He is there because he wants to be there, and he says he is not lonely.

On a drive back from Norfolk, Virginia, I stopped at a little store for my usual afternoon snack: a Pepsi and a pack of Nabs. Being not the least bit shy, I boldly asked Homer about his life in the swamp and the inherent loneliness. He replied with a surprising openness for a man who shuns company. He said, "God made everything around me: every stump, every snake, every vine and sinkhole. And he made me. So I'm part of it all. How can I be lonesome?"

At first it sounded pretty good to me. As I talked to Homer at the little grocery store on the bank of the canal near South Mills, North Carolina, he seemed to be content with his life. He told me he had no electric bill because he had no electricity. He had no car payment because he had no car. His only transportation was a little flat-bottomed boat. His sole income was a monthly disability check from the government.

As he squatted on the store's little porch, he said, "I ain't got a enemy in the world 'cause I don't owe nobody. I ain't got what you'd call friends neither 'cause they'd always be a-wantin' something so I don't cultivate 'em. I'm my own man."

That was about the extent of our conversation. I watched him as he bought some items and loaded them in his little boat tied to the bank of the canal and wondered what would make a man choose such a solitary life.

"He's sort of a legend around here," said the storekeeper. "Some say he come back shell-shocked after the Vietnam War and couldn't stand being around people and noise so he just took hisself off to the swamp."

I watched Homer paddle his boat down the canal back toward his home in the swamp. I knew that when he got there, no one would greet him. There would be no one there to share his evening meal. He would sleep alone. The next day and the day after, his conversations with nature would be one-sided monologues.

The world would continue to pass on by Homer Cashwell: the world of noise and pollution, of conflict and strife, of wars and famine and hate. But the world of love and humanity would also pass him by: a world that cares about disaster victims in a country far away and a world where neighbors bring food to a mourning family next door.

Homer has chosen to shut out the world — the good and the bad. By doing so, not only has the community lost a valuable human being, but Homer has lost the warmth of the human touch — something more valuable than solitude no matter how hectic our lives may be.

Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.

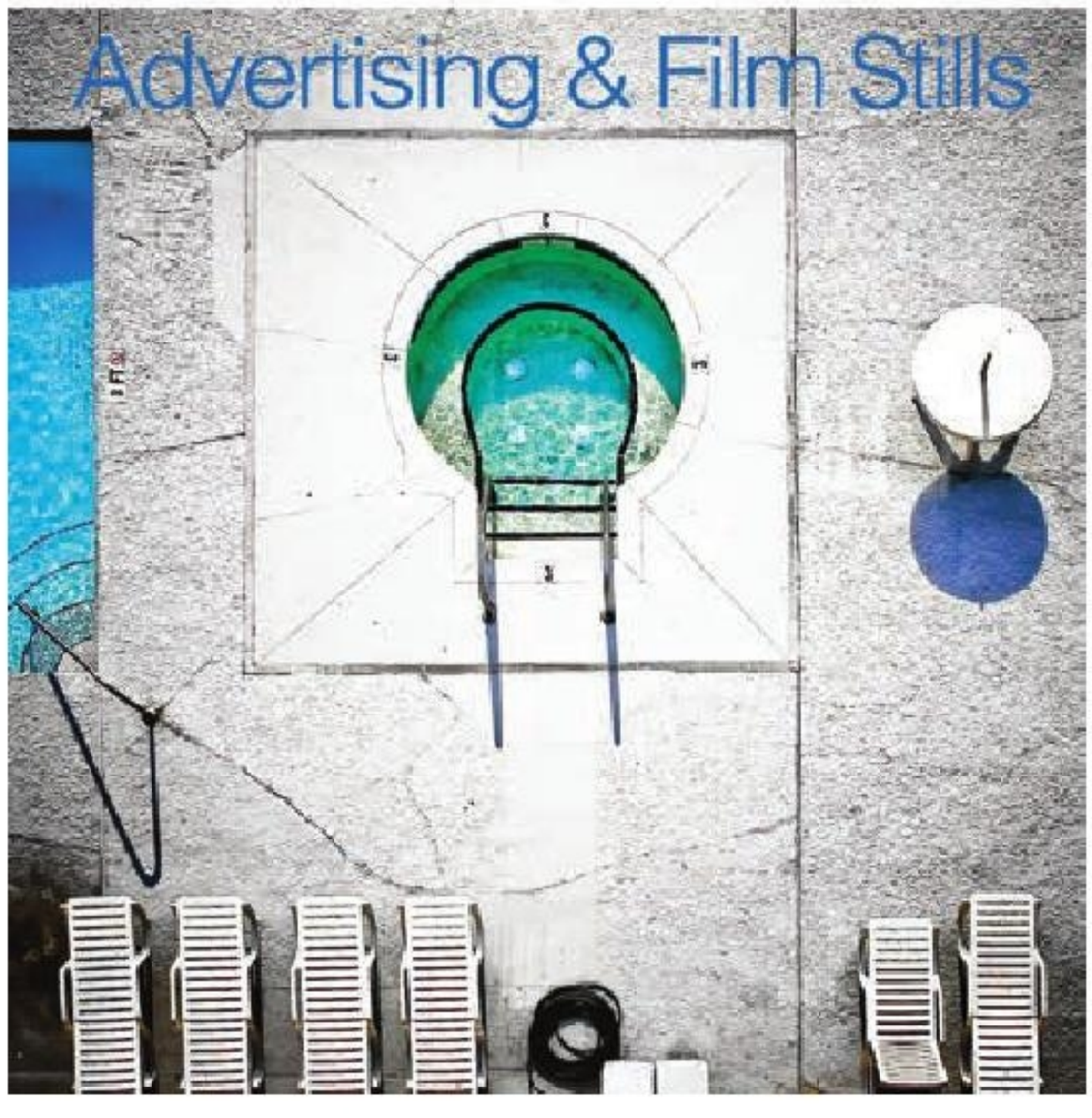
Alexander
Koonce
Intracoastal
REALTY CORPORATION
Experience the Exceptional
910•509•1949 | cell: 910•233•7225 | 800•533•1840
www.alexanderkoonce.com
SALT GRASS
Marsh Oaks
Rediscover Salt Grass at Marsh Oaks
New Homes from the mid 300's
Desirable location in established community
Decorated model open daily
• 3 & 4 bedroom plans, 2,500 - 3,500 sq. ft.
• Community amenities: clubhouse, pool, 2 tennis courts, playground and more!
• View all plans: www.AlexanderKoonce.com or call Alexander today to schedule a showing
1802 Hawthorne Road
South Oleander. Immaculately maintained home located in the sought after neighborhood of South Oleander. This low maintenance home, with all systems/features updated offers a large master down, 3 beds plus office/bonus space upstairs.
It boasts hardwood floors throughout both levels, formal living room and dining room and a spacious wood paneled den with fireplace and sunroom which overlooks a lush and meticulously cared for yard.
$414,900
330 Gooseneck Road A-3
Swann Plantation. RIVERFRONT BOAT/NATURE LOVER'S DREAM!! Well maintained townhome offers wonderful views of the NE Cape Fear River. Main level offers open floorplan with new laminate wood floors throughout, kitchen with new appliances, ½ bath, dining & living room area that leads to a large porch overlooking the river. Top floor has 2 bedrooms, each with bath, laundry area, & new carpeting. Master bedroom opens to porch offering panoramic views of the river. Two car carport & large storage room. All exterior maintenance, landscaping, & dock maintenance is handled by the HOA. $179,900
EXPECT ROYAL TREATMENT
www.alexanderkoonce.com
1900 Eastwood Road · Suite 38 Lumina Station
Wilmington, NC 28403
zander@alexanderkoonce.com

JOHN GESSNER

Photographer

910-638-1687

www.johngessner.com



Snowy Owl

An invader from the far North

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE MCCLOY

By Susan Campbell

In the bird world, this winter will certainly be remembered for the largest invasion of snowy owls along the East Coast, *ever*. Although there are a few individuals observed in the Northeastern states each year, never before have there been dozens found as far south as the Carolinas. Reports have been rolling in from Maine to South Carolina since just before Thanksgiving. It does not take an experienced birdwatcher to spot and identify these massive owls.

Snowies are typically seen in northern Canada and, to varying degrees, into the extreme northern edge of the United States from October through March. Breeding, however, occurs in the high Arctic on the open tundra. Young birds are the ones most likely to disperse south following very productive summers. When prey such as lemmings are abundant, four or more hatchlings will survive and then face intense competition on the wintering grounds. Many juveniles will head southward in search of food.

Second in size to only the great gray owl, snowy owls are large birds. Adults are almost completely white with scattered gray flecking, a smallish head and bright yellow eyes. Immature birds will be darkly barred except for the all-white face, through their second summer. As with all owls, they are feathered from the base of the bill to their powerful toes. Not only does this insulate them against the weather but, more importantly, it muffles the sound of their movements as they dive on prey, often from an elevated perch.

History tells us that the owls found south of the usual wintering range are often hungry and stressed. They are seen foraging during the daytime, which is not typical behavior. Although their preferred prey is, not surprisingly, rodents, they will settle for birds, fish and even aquatic invertebrates if need be. More than once, an emaciated owl has been taken in by a wildlife rehabilitator in the Lower 48.

Since airfields mimic the open tundra with which they are so familiar, snowies are often found at large (and busy) airports, which presents risk for bird and aircraft alike. Removal of these birds during the winter months may then be necessary. Because they are such charismatic birds whose activities are monitored by local birders, the authorities have been shying away from shooting so-called problem birds, choosing instead to use more humane methods. Trained falconers have been employed to trap and move snowy owls found in places such as Boston Logan International and, more recently, JFK.

The first snowy owl located in North Carolina was a bird found in the dunes at Cape Point on the Outer Banks. Others have turned up in a variety of locations, from the mountains of Brevard to Charlotte and Raleigh and locations around Lake Mattamuskeet. An individual was even photographed on a tall stack of shipping containers at the Port of Wilmington. There could very well be more reports of the species around the state this winter than all historic reports combined.

So if you are driving through agricultural fields, passing through an airport or even visiting a local high school with large playing fields, keep an eye out for a big white bird. Hungry snowy owls could be anywhere this winter. And if you spot one or talk to someone else who has, please let me know!

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted by email at susan@ncaves.com, or at (910) 949-3207.

Little Miss Valentine

A glass of wine, a pretty young gal, and the story of a sea duck

By Tom Bryant

She was standing on her toes peering intently up at a pair of mounted oldsquaw ducks I have hanging from the wall in the sunroom. She had one hand on the table, bracing herself to keep her balance, the other hand holding a wine glass. Dressed in a short green jumper covered with Valentine hearts, she also had the attention of all the other men in the room.

"How about letting me freshen up that wine glass for you, young lady?"

"Sure, you must be Mr. Bryant."

"Yep, that's me. Tom to my friends. I see you're interested in that pair of oldsquaw ducks."

"I really am, and my name's LeeAnne, by the way. Were they alive?"

That question kind of caught me by surprise. "Well, they were alive at one time."

"That means you killed them? Did you stuff them?"

"No. A taxidermist did that for me. He passed away many years ago. Let me get you that wine." I went up the steps to the kitchen to the wine bar where Linda, my bride of many years, was filling glasses. "Pinot grigio," I said with a flourish.

"When did you start drinking ladies' wine?" Linda asked.

"It's not for me. It's for little Miss Valentine down there." I motioned toward the sunroom. "Is she old enough to be drinking?" I asked. "She looks 16."

"Anyone under the age of 40 looks to be 16 to you, especially if they're blonde and beautiful. That girl graduated from Boston College last year and is visiting her aunt, who lives in Weymouth. Help me pass around these hors d'oeuvres."

We were having an impromptu Valentine going-away celebration, as we were gearing up to head south in the little Airstream for the final winter months. We were going down to what Linda lovingly calls the fish camp, an RV park on Chokoloskee Island just below Everglades City, Florida.

"I've got to get this wine back to our little guest," I said, giving my best lecherous eyebrows-going-up-and-down Groucho Marx imitation.

"That little girl is young enough to be your granddaughter," Linda said laughing. I headed back to the sunroom, where the blonde girl had gathered an audience.

"Here you go." I handed the glass of wine to our young guest and noticed that my old hunting buddy, Bubba, had come in the room and was leaning up against the bar wall, arms crossed. He was down for the morning, bird hunting, and just happened to drop by. When he saw me looking his way, he also did his Groucho imitation, grinning from ear to ear.

"Tell me about those ducks," the Valentine girl said.

They're sea ducks, LeeAnne, and I got them on a hunt to the Eastern Shore of Maryland back in the early '80s, 1981 I think, to be exact."

"Wow, before I was born," she replied.

"You really know how to hurt a fellow," I said, laughing.

"I meant . . . you don't look that old. I mean . . ."

"Don't worry, young lady. My feelings are OK. There are some advantages to being old. Older, I should say. But back to those ducks, those are oldsquaws. No, I take that back. They used to be called by that name. The political correctness police, in an effort not to offend our Native American elderly ladies, have changed the name to long-tail ducks, even though tribal members call their elderly Native American ladies old squaws. But that's neither here nor there. That was my one and only sea duck hunt."

"Why was that?" she asked. Four or five people were listening intently as I was talking about the '80s duck hunt. I think they were just admiring the scenery and it wasn't the oldsquaw ducks. Bubba was still holding up the wall of the bar, grinning.

"Sea ducks, as their name implies, spend most of their life on the waters of bays, sounds and even the ocean. They are diving ducks and eat fish as a main diet. Now I have an unwritten code, and so do the friends I hunt with. We eat what we kill. If we can't eat it, we don't kill it. Have you ever eaten a duck?"

"I have and it was delicious. We were at a fancy restaurant in Raleigh, and I ordered it from the menu."

"That was a farm duck, raised for the table like chickens. Wild ducks, like that mallard on the wall over there, are all dark meat, no fat, and that's the kind of duck I eat. They are called puddle ducks and feed on vegetation and are great for dining if prepared right."

"How do sea ducks taste?" I don't know if the girl was actually interested in the information or was just humoring me; but hey, in for a penny, in for a pound.

"We cleaned those ducks on the hotel dock there at St. Michaels and had about twenty or so, I think. We divided them among ourselves and carried them home to our freezers. About two weeks later, I decided to cook up

some for dinner; so I thawed a few and marinated them in buttermilk. I had read somewhere that buttermilk would take the gamey taste out of sea ducks. I never found out if it did or not. The smell was so bad that I buried the whole kit and caboodle in the backyard behind our dog kennel. Paddle, my yellow Lab, refused to go back there for a week or so. That's why I don't hunt sea ducks anymore. They sure are pretty, though." We both looked up at the oldsquaw mounts.

"Wow, good story," she said. "Thanks for telling me all that. I guess I had better find Aunt Ida. She leaned up kissed me on the cheek and softly said, looking at Bubba, "Tell your buddy over there, that he's almost as cute as you are."

Bubba came over as the group dispersed, draped an arm over my shoulder and we both watched Miss Valentine twitch up the stairs to the kitchen. "Ah, youth," he said.

"Wasted on the young," I replied.

"Squire Bryant," Bubba said with a flourish, "step over to yon bar for a little refreshment and while there enlighten me about that magnificent specimen of a redhead duck you have hanging next to the window. But first a question. Was it alive?"

"Shut up, Bubba." He bent over he was laughing so hard.

Tom Bryant is a lifelong outdoorsman and Salt's *Sporting Life columnist.*

ESTATE ADMINISTRATION | PROBATE MATTERS
WILL CAVEATS | GUARDIANSHIPS
PROBATE LITIGATION

LAWRENCE S. CRAIGE
Elder Law, Estate Planning, Estate Administration, Guardianship
Board Certified Specialist in Elder Law
Certified Elder Law Attorney

CHARLOTTE NOEL FOX
Business Law, Civil Litigation, Municipal Law, Real Property, Estate Administration

ASHLEY MICHAEL
Family Law, Adoptions, Surrogacy
Certified Mediator-Family Financial Collaborative Law Trained Professional

BONNIE MANGUM BRAUDWAY
Homeowner Association Law, Debt Collection, Real Property

910.815.0085 CRAIGE & FOX PLLC 910.815.1095
ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS AT LAW

LAWRENCE S. CRAIGE | CHARLOTTE NOEL FOX | ASHLEY MICHAEL | BONNIE MANGUM BRAUDWAY
Board Certified Specialist in Elder Law
Certified Elder Law Attorney
Certified Mediator - Family Financial Collaborative Law

TACT
THALIAN ASSOCIATION CHILDREN'S THEATER
PROUDLY PRESENTS
SEUSSICAL, Jr.
FEBRUARY 14-23, 2014
FRIDAY-SATURDAY 7 PM SUNDAY 3 PM
910.341.7860 TICKETS $12 ($.75 PRESERVATION FEE)
225th Anniversary
HANNAH BLOCK 2ND STREET STAGE
120 S. 2ND STREET • HISTORIC HANNAH BLOCK USO BUILDING

We'll help you find your interior beauty
nest
Fine Gifts and Interiors
Wilmington's premier interior design center
furniture • upholstery • carpet & rugs • wallpaper • lighting • artwork • fabrics
wall coverings • window treatments • custom orders interior design services
Located in The Forum | 1125-T Military Cutoff | (910) 256-6378 | www.nestfinegifts.com | like us on facebook

True Hollywood Romance

An on-location Valentine's Day vacation in Southport

By Virginia Holman

Southport has long been known as a sleepy Southern town. Situated along the Cape Fear River, the Intracoastal Waterway and "around the corner" from the Atlantic Ocean, its appeal lies in both its mellow coastal vibe and its evocation of a past suspended in amber. Victorian homes and cottages shaded by live oaks line its wide streets, and remnants of its former halcyon days as a Colonial seaport and fishing village have been preserved in its charming downtown, first through decades of benign neglect and, in the last twenty years, a preservationist mindset that has eluded too many of our coastal communities. Southport is a tiny gem, a coastal village minus the area's primary tourist draw: a wide sandy beach.

The vast majority of Southport's visitors are day trippers who stop by for an afternoon or a weekend, then make their way to their true destination: Bald Head Island, Carolina Beach, Oak Island. Since the recent filming of the popular contemporary fairy tale, *Safe Haven*, that seems likely to change. The 2013 thriller, based on a Nicholas Sparks novel, is a classic romantic drama. Two troubled characters meet, and – spoiler alert – fall irrevocably in love. Alex, played by the languidly handsome Josh Duhamel, is a broken-hearted widower and father of two, who runs the local harborfront store. Katie, played by Julianne Hough, is the young wife of an abusive policeman who has fled Boston for Southport. Southport plays itself in the film, and

PHOTOGRAPHS BY VIRGINIA HOLMAN

Nicholas Sparks cites the charming seaside town as the inspiration for the book and the movie.

Want to create some Hollywood-style romance here in North Carolina? Consider booking a weekend at the Robert Ruark Inn (119 North Lord Street, Southport; (910) 363-4169) and take a romantic "on-location vacation."

Friday

4 p.m. — Take the Fort Fisher to Southport ferry. The ferry is featured in two scenes in the film: when Katie and Alex spend a splendid day with his young daughter and son at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, and in the penultimate crisis in the film, when Katie almost leaves Alex and Southport to escape her troubled husband, who has tracked her down in Southport. The ferry affords excellent views of the river and notable historic sites such as Price's Creek Lighthouse. You may feed boat-tailed grackles and laughing gulls from the back of the ferry. So if you bring the kids, take along some stale bread.

The Southport ferry is located at 1650 Ferry Road Southeast, Southport. The Fort Fisher ferry is located at 2422 South Fort Fisher Boulevard, Kure Beach. For the Southport-Fort Fisher ferry schedule, visit www.ncdot.gov/ferry or call (910) 457-6942

6 p.m. — Dinner and sunset at Old American Fish Company. This indoor/outdoor waterfront restaurant was renamed Ivan's Fish Shack for the movie, and it's where Katie got a job waitressing thanks to her fairy godmother, Maddie (Robin Mullins). Sit outside if the weather is good, and enjoy the view of the small harbor with its sloops and trawlers. Though Ryan's Port Market, the family store where Alex worked, was removed after filming, you can visit Potter's Seafood on the harborfront, just 200 yards to the west. Potter's is a fifth-generation commercial fishing outfit. You may want to bring a cooler to take some fresh shrimp home with you at the end of your trip.

Old American Fish Company, 150 Yacht Basin Drive. Open weekdays, 4 p.m.–close; weekends from 1–9 p.m. Information: www.oldamericanfish-company.com

Potter's Seafood, 94 Yacht Basin Drive. Information: (910) 457-0101.

7:30 p.m. — Stop by Waterfront Park (at East Bay and South Howe Street) and enjoy a long stroll along the riverfront. Katie and her mysterious friend, Jo, had several heart-to-heart talks along Southport's well groomed "front porch." It's the perfect place to take in the sunrise or sunset. The town has installed benches, a picnic area, a community pier and porch swings.

Saturday

9 a.m. —Enjoy breakfast at Moore Street Market. Katie's friend, Jo, scurries to greet her out in front of this converted double galleried home. This popular breakfast and lunch spot features fair trade organic coffee and unique sandwiches. Egg salad and bacon on a soft pretzel roll is a local favorite.

Moore Street Market, 130 East Moore Street. Information: (910) 363-4203.

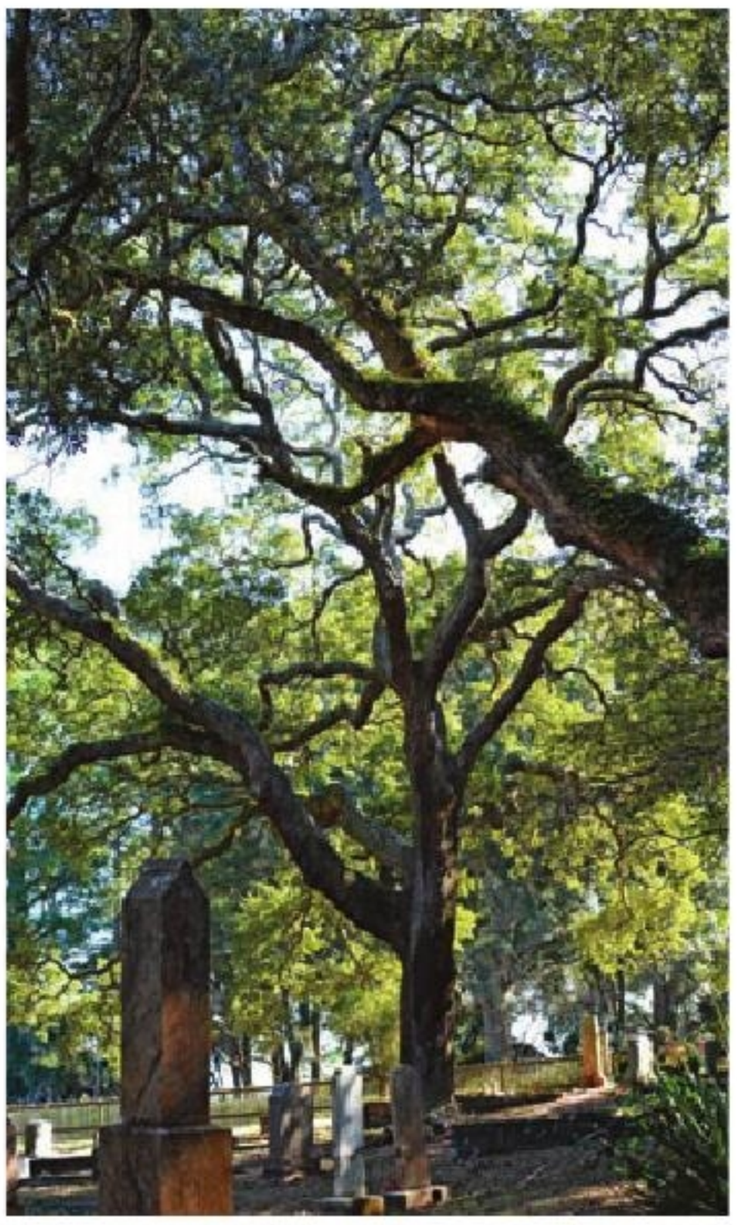
10 a.m. — On-location vacationers often request a trip to the pond where Alex and Katie canoed. Unfortunately, that pond is on Pleasant Oaks Plantation, which is private property. However, the good people at The Adventure Company will book a two-hour tour for you that will take you on a canoe or kayak trip through similar stands of ancient cypress trees. If you're lucky, maybe you too will get caught in the rain with your sweetheart just like Alex and Katie. Bring a towel and a change of clothes, just in case.

The Adventure Company, 807-A Howe Street. Information: (910) 454-0607.

1 p.m. — Have lunch at the Wildlife Grill. This is the homey little café where Katie and Alex shared their first dance to the song "The Journey" by FM Radio. Snuggle up in a cozy booth and enjoy down home cooking and long lingering gazes.

Wildlife Grill, 4381 Fish Factory Road Southeast.

3 p.m. — Take a tour of the Old Smithville Burying Ground. When Alex discovers Katie is married, he feels betrayed, and refuses to listen to her side of the story. As Katie flees, weeping, she wrecks the bike that Alex gave her beside this beautiful historic cemetery, which was established prior to the Revolutionary War. It's the final resting place of soldiers, river pilots and families who worked the sea. You can spend quite a while wandering the grounds. The faded markers and obelisks are shaded by magnificent live oak trees draped in Spanish moss and resurrection fern.



Old Smithville Burying Ground, East Moore Street.

5 p.m. — Have a beer at Loco Jo's gastropub. This fun, funky little spot was popular with the *Safe Haven* cast and crew. Indoor and outdoor seating. A bewildering large selection of craft beers and the best fish tacos in town.

Loco Jo's, 602 North Howe Street, Suite E.

7:30 p.m. — Candlelight dinner at Ports of Call. This is the lovely Mediterranean-themed restaurant where Katie and Alex enjoyed an intimate dinner and talked, for the first time, about his grief. It's also where actor Josh Duhamel learned how to shuck an oyster from head chef Christopher Wheeler and where actress Julianne Hough chose to celebrate her 23rd birthday. Reservations are accepted but not required. They also serve Sunday brunch.

Ports of Call, 116 North Howe Street; Information: (910) 457-4544.

Sunday

10 a.m. — Stroll the promenade. The town square and North Howe Street were featured in the film's exciting Fourth of July parade scene. (Yes, Southport has an annual July Fourth parade that attracts thousands.) On non-parade weekends the main thoroughfare is loaded with great antique shops and upscale boutiques. Southport Antiques has two floors of antique furnishings, everything from cruets to captain's wheels.

For the fashionista in your family, check out Shop Girl, which has hip yet feminine clothes with a decidedly coastal flavor. Julianne Hough is said to have visited the shop while filming.

Shop Girl, 701 North Howe Street; Information: (910) 457-9575.

12 p.m. — Still can't get enough? Take a movie-themed electric tram tour with Southport Fun Tours. You'll visit the historic Grey Burris house, which was used as Alex's home in *Safe Haven*, visit the historic Southport Jail where Sissy Spacek was filed for *Crimes of the Heart*, and the Pilot Tower seen on Stephen King's *Under the Dome* mini-series.

Information: www.southportfuntours.com; dan@southportfuntours.com; or (910)713-3373; (608) 334-0617.

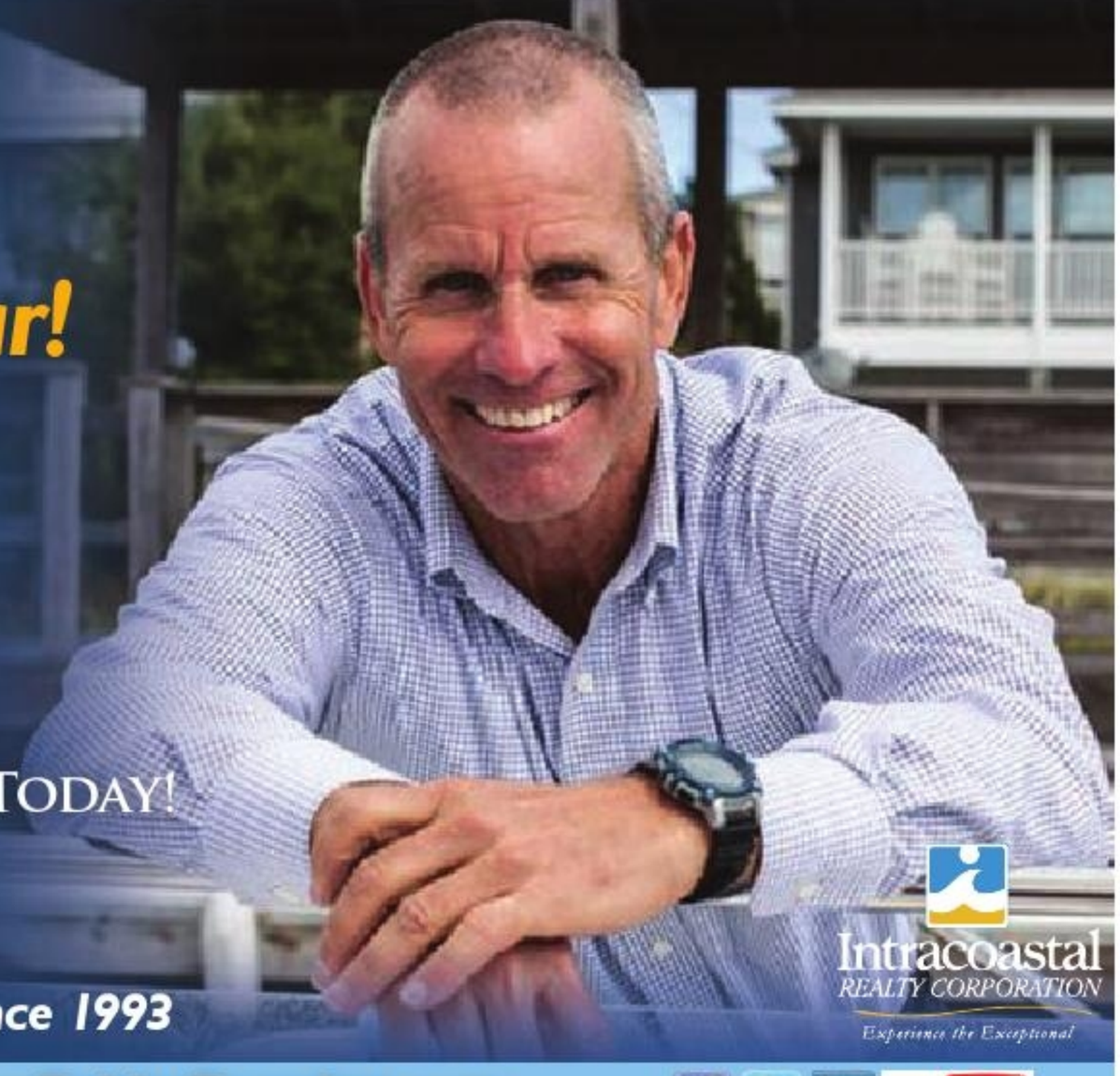
Author Virginia Holman teaches in the Creative Writing Department at UNC Wilmington. She is also ACA certified Level 3 Coastal Kayak Instructor and guides part time with Kayak Carolina.

Congratulations to

Bobby Brandon

The Wilmington Regional Association of Realtors

Salesperson of the Year!



Bobby Brandon

Going the Distance for You

KEEPING REAL ESTATE REAL, CALL US TODAY!

910.538.6261

BOBBYB@INTRACOASTALREALTY.COM

Selling Wrightsville Beach and Wilmington since 1993

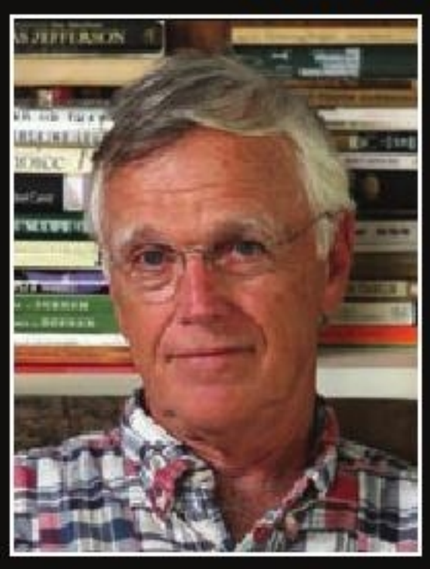
Intracoastal REALTY CORPORATION

Experience the Exceptional

Check out Bobby's local videos at www.BobbyBrandon.com

Non - Profit

BookSmARTS



Jill McCorkle

Randall Kenan

Lee Smith

A Live Interview with Three Great American Writers
Interviewed by **Clyde Edgerton**

March 8, 2014 • 3:00 p.m.

Lumina Theater-UNCW • Admission $25

Questions accepted from area book clubs.
Email: info@artscouncilofwilmington.org
Phone: 910.343.0998

The Arts Council of Wilmington & NHC www.artscouncilofwilmington.org

FOURTH FRIDAY

GALLERY NIGHTS

Downtown Wilmington, NC

2014

Jan 24	May 23	Sep 26
Feb 28	Jun 27	Oct 24
Mar 28	Jul 25	Nov 28
Apr 25	Aug 22	Dec 26

Join local art galleries and studios in an after-hours celebration of art and culture on the fourth Friday of each month from 6pm to 9pm.

www.artscouncilofwilmington.org

ACES Gallery
221 N. Front St.

Acme Art Studios
711 N. 5th Ave.

Art Factory Gallery & Studios
721 Surrey St.

the ArtWorks
200 Willard St.

Bottega Bar & Gallery
208 N. Front St.

Cape Fear Native
114 Princess St.

Crescent Moon
24 N. Front St.

The Wilma W. Daniels Gallery @ CFCC
200 Hanover St.

The Gallery at SALT Studio
805 N. 4th St.

The Golden Gallery
307 N. Front St.

MC Erny Gallery @ WHQR
254 N. Front St.

New Elements Gallery
201 Princess St.

Port City Pottery & Fine Crafts
307 N. Front St.

River to Sea Gallery
225 S. Water St.

Urban Revival
606 Castle St.

For more information on Fourth Friday Gallery Nights, call the Arts Council of Wilmington at 910-343-0998.

The Arts Council of Wilmington & NHC

February 2014

Winter, Halyburton Park

Birdfeeders are three-fingers from full, each bearing
a different seed – a buffet for birds. Only

the hummingbird feeders are empty, swing
like mute wind chimes. Clouds are cotton batting

wind-drawn across the sky. Somewhere else,
their weightiness could mean snow,

but this is the South, where bare trees are occasional,
where the leaves of live oaks are more drab than green.

My daughter's first year in Savannah was punctuated
by a brief flurry, unseen in over ten years. Aproned

ladies in the college cafeteria set aside serving spoons
and clustered at the windows, laughing

the way anyone might laugh at the pleasantly unexpected.
Craving evidence that our lives can change this quickly,

we open our mouths to the temporary, to these flakes
which bear the weight of every past storm

the way each first kiss carries the memory of love
untainted, flickering like a silent movie.

– Lavonne J. Adams

Making Magic

Bill Vassar on Hollywood East

By Skip Maloney

It was a Christmas gift without immediately discernible value, though loaded with potential. Last December, North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory released a statement noting that in 2013, "popular television productions fueled one of the strongest years experienced by the film industry in North Carolina."

"In addition to our state's beauty," said McCrory, "we've developed the work force and artists that make North Carolina an ideal place to produce quality products efficiently."

The statement went on to say that year-end projections showed television and film productions had a direct in-state spending in excess of $254 million, and created more than 4,000 well-paying crew positions for the state's highly skilled work force. These productions created nearly 25,000 job opportunities (full-time equivalent and temporary jobs), including talent and background extra positions for North Carolinians. These numbers were the second-highest in the industry's history for in-state spending by productions, as well as total job opportunities created.

According to Johnny Griffin, director of the Wilmington Regional Film Commission, about half of that $254 million was spent in Wilmington, and half of the "well-paying crew positions" were based here as well.

Governor McCrory's statement about the success of film projects in North Carolina revived hopes that the state's 25 percent production tax incentive, set to expire on January 15, 2015, would be renewed. Those hopes had been dashed last summer when North Carolina's legislature approved a budget that would let the program "sunset" next January.

With the state of Georgia already offering a 30 percent incentive plan, which, in effect, shifted *The Hunger Games* franchise from its origin in North Carolina to a second installment filmed in Georgia, there is concern among studio executives and employees of EUE/Screen Gems on 23rd Street in Wilmington that failure to renew the state's 25 percent plan would have a major impact on the studio's ability to lure production companies to North Carolina. Though McCrory fell short of actually declaring his support for the incentive program, and any specific plans to back its renewal, advocates of the program, including crew members and studio executives, were encouraged by his statement, seeing it as a sign that he would, in fact, support an extension of the tax credits.

In the absence of that support, and a legislative vote to renew the incentive, the local film industry is likely to lose some of the ground that it has gained over the past few years.

"The immediate impact," said Griffin, "would be that North Carolina and Wilmington, specifically, will lose their luster as a place to do business."

According to Griffin, there are a variety of factors that enter into a studio's decision to film in any location, and they all come down to a cost, a number, and one of the pieces in that decision puzzle is the value of an incentive program.

"Take that away," he said, "and it drastically changes the number. Wilmington no longer becomes attractive."

"They [the decision makers] will tell you; they're coupon shoppers," he added. "They'll tell you they're only allowed to shop at places that offer coupons and ask you for a coupon that's actually worth something. It's become a pre-qualifier."

The local industry's argument for renewing the incentive is the positive results achieved to date, up to and including the hosting of what has become 2013's top-grossing film, *Iron Man 3*.

"It's one thing to go fishing and keep asking someone to let you toss the line out there four or five times, with no results," said Griffin. "We're coming back to the docks and saying, 'Look at what we got.'"

The Regional Film Commission has already started receiving calls, asking

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM EUE/SCREEN GEMS

Aerial view of the ten-stage EUE/Screen Gems complex and support buildings

about the future of the state's tax incentive program, because television productions, in particular, are looking for long-term commitments that even here, in the early days of 2014, will have an impact on plans being made for 2015, after the current incentive program has expired.

Thus, the mixed blessing of Governor McCrory's statement, which appears to support renewal of the incentive, while falling short of an actual endorsement.

In the weeks just before Christmas, *Salt* magazine sat down with EUE/Screen Gems Executive Vice President Bill Vassar to discuss the studio's history, its current success, and the challenges it faces in the future. These discussions were not linear. Like the films that are produced at the studio , the temporal order of the questions and answers that follow are something of an illusion, and they start, as a matter of convenience, with a glimpse into Vassar's personal history.

SALT: How long have you been an executive vice president for EUE/Screen Gems?

VASSAR: Well, I've had the title for twelve years. I've been with the company for sixteen years; started with them in New York, running the TV facility up there. They asked me to get involved down here, and I started overseeing this place out of New York.

SALT: How did you get started in the business?

VASSAR: I've been in the media business for forty-four years, and what I love about what I've been able to experience is that it's been a renaissance career. I've done so many different things, and worked in so many jobs, that it's always stayed interesting. The first fifteen years were exclusively radio — DJ, program manager, morning man in New Haven. I went into sales, sales management and then, station management. I ended up working for the *Boston Globe* in Springfield, and they transferred me to White Plains [New York]. Then I found myself on the street when they sold the station.

My dream had always been to work for NBC television, and through an absolute miracle, and a blind box ad in *The New York Times*, [I landed a job] in the entertainment division of NBC Productions, which is where I learned TV production. Myself and another guy handled shows from independent producers, and I was the No. 2 person moving *The Cosby Show*. It was the most bizarre thing, having just come from running a radio station to being where I always wanted to be, doing what I always wanted to do.

SALT: How long were you there?

VASSAR: I had a wonderful five years there, interacting with *Saturday Night Live, Letterman,* the Macy's parade, soap operas, doing Bob Hope specials.

SALT: So how did you end up landing the job with EUE/Screen Gems?

VASSAR: After NBC, I went back into the radio business as an owner of a station in Syracuse, New York. Then, I moved back to New York City and worked for a large nationwide TV facility supplier for six years. I got to know the Cooneys over a period of time, and they asked me to join EUE/Screen Gems in New York . . . I was brought into this operation eleven years ago to evaluate it and determine what we had to do to make it work. I worked in New York and Wilmington for three years before relocating full time to Wilmington about eight years ago.

SALT: What were some of the particular challenges you faced?

VASSAR: A few years before [the Cooneys] bought this place, all the networks were doing these made-for-TV movies. You'd get a star from this show, and a star from that show and put them together in a movie. They were low-budget and usually took about three or four weeks to do. You'd have four or five of these going at the same time. You could go downtown in Wilmington on a Sunday and see three different productions going on. In the early-to-mid 90s, this place was the "Made-for-TV" capital of the world. Then, Canada and its provinces, too, got into the incentive business; offering very lucrative incentives. The first stuff that went up there was the "Made-for-TV" movies, which basically turned this place into a ghost town.

SALT: How did you turn that around?

VASSAR: [One of the advantages we started with was that] when Dino

Clockwise: Productions have access to complete construction and mill workshops to build anything needed for their sets. The paint shop complex can add color to anything from sets to furniture to tombstones. Stage 10 is one of the largest sound stages east of Hollywood with 37,500 sq ft of production space.

[DeLaurentiis] got here in the mid-'80s, he brought the best artisans, craftspeople and film workers from all over the United States, from around the world, really. He brought riggers from England, and painters from Italy, so for the first year he was here, he basically was running a school to teach the locals how to do these jobs. He'd hire somebody who was wiring houses to come out here and learn how to be an electrician on a film. He was hiring riggers, [in one case] hiring a family that was going from town to town rigging circuses. And a lot of these people are still working here. He built a quality crew base in this town [that previously] could only be found in New York or Los Angeles. We have second generation people here; people who grew up at the knees of their moms and dads, learning the industry. Some of the best carpenters on this lot are people whose dads worked as carpenters here, too.

SALT: Dating back to the earlier days with the DEG Studios, later Carolco and now, with EUE/Screen Gems, what were the challenges associated with convincing people from Los Angeles to come here and make their films?

VASSAR: I can only speak to our evolution, because we were the only ones that were in that business, of attracting people to use this as a facility so that we could help them make their film. The other two companies made their own films. That's what this facility was built for. We looked at it as a different business model. It was a risk, and the company lost money for many, many years.

SALT: Did you run into problems convincing people to buy into the new business model?

VASSAR: It wasn't necessarily a problem. We knew it was going to be a long-term sell. Lots of calls to Los Angeles. One of the smartest things that George [Cooney] did is that he hired Frank Capra to run it. By hiring Capra, you hired instant credibility, access to every studio at the senior management level in California. You had pre-developed relationships that were multi-generational. He was Hollywood royalty.

SALT: What were some of the "nuts and bolts" things you did to update the facility?

VASSAR: We had not been in the lighting and grip business. At the start, I was running things from New York, coming down here and observing and [I noticed that] the studios were bringing in their own equipment. It was a whole revenue stream that we were missing. Not right away, but over time, we started purchasing equipment. On top of that, we built a shop that is second to none, doing repairs. What if [a production] breaks a lens, or a cable goes bad? You can get it repaired or replaced.

SALT: So the improvements were a combination of equipment and services.

VASSAR: [The overall idea] was full service, like you're in those AllState hands. If something goes wrong, you can reach someone here 24/7. Something changes in the middle of the night, a schedule changes, or you have bigwigs coming out here from LA and they need offices and special attention, we can set that up for you.
This wasn't so much my vision as it was the vision of the [Cooney] family that owned the business. It's always been based on relationships. George [Cooney's] idea of a contract was a handshake and a few notes, and [this is with] third generations of families that we've been doing business with.

SALT: And this full-service approach is what led to the upgrade of your Internet services?

VASSAR: To redo the Internet here cost a major amount of money. If we hadn't installed state-of-the-art fiber in here, capable of handling growth in the next 10–15 years, we'd have failed with *Iron Man*. We had the chance to do something extraordinary. My feeling was that if the old system had been here, people would have gone back to LA and told everybody that working here was like working in Hooterville. We were able to tell [the producers of *Iron Man*] that their artists didn't need to be here. You could upload from here, download from here. They collaborated with artists all over the world. The biggest compliment we ever had was at the end of *Iron Man*, the head of the film's information technology (IT) department said this was, by far, the most sophisticated Internet [service] of any studio he'd worked with in the world.

SALT: Are there further improvements to come?

VASSAR: There's always improvement and the possibility of expansion. The family bought twelve acres of abutting land which will give us room to expand. I'd like to see a special effects company here, people that make the 3-D backgrounds. I'm talking to people about it, possibly expanding [their work] from another city. I would like to see that service here.

SALT: Has any thought been given to a locally based product? A film that originates with ideas generated here in Wilmington?

VASSAR: That's so different from the business that we're in. The two prior companies fell into bankruptcy and that's what they did. This is what we do, and we do it the best. That's not to say that we might not partner with someone to make a film in what's called a "shared risk" arrangement, but we know we're good in the facilities business.

We had a woman from Disney come here, looking for a place to do a film, and after an hour and a half of taking her through the place, she said, "I can't believe this place is here. A turnkey facility, not on the outskirts somewhere." And I told her, yeah, you can call me on a Friday morning, send your office manager here at noon, and I'll have your offices totally set up for you by Monday morning; Internet, phones, desks, chairs, bulletin boards. You just tell me where you want them.

The intention was to be the best. We want to provide the best product to our clients. Our goal was — anybody who comes to work here will tell someone else what a wonderful experience it was. If it doesn't work out for someone, they'll tell thirty of their friends that it's not up to par. If you do a good job, they'll tell five people, so you figure, if you do a good job, you're five people ahead.

SALT: So what's on the studio's event horizon at the moment?

VASSAR: I'm looking forward to the next season of *Sleepy Hollow*. They will be expanding the amount of production that they do here. It's such an innovative show. I've never seen a television show where the writing is so good, the creative is so good, the art is so good, the acting is so good . . . Did I mention the writing? The writing is spectacular. And it's such a beautiful show to look at. I mean, you're moving between different centuries. You've got somebody who's come here from 250 years ago, and he was a special services, spy person to George Washington, so he's got the mind of a cop. It's basically a buddy cop show, [with a] formal Brit and an African-American woman; not your typical two guys who are cop buddies.

SALT: Has the facility evolved to the point where the studios and producers are coming to you now, instead of having to beat the bushes to get them to come here?

VASSAR: You need to keep your name out there. What's changed is that you used to have to be in touch with different producers, and now, those decisions are being made by the studios. You have to know what the studios are thinking and you want to be on their approved list. You have to stay in front of the financial decision makers; keep them up to date.

SALT: Are there any facts about this studio's operations that you'd like the general public to know?

VASSAR: The number of jobs it creates, the amount of income taxes and sales taxes that are generated, not just for the state, but for the county.

SALT: Which brings us to the renewal of the incentive program. Obviously, you'd like to see it renewed. Would you like to see it go up, say to Georgia's 30 percent?

VASSAR: We don't need it to go up, we just need it to continue, and ideally, we'd like to see it without a drop-dead date, when it expires. We'd prefer a program that didn't "sunset," so if a studio was making a plan, especially for a TV show [that's looking to go] multiple years, and move on to syndication to cable, which is where the real money is made, [they could make plans beyond a sunset date].

SALT: Is there any particular exciting project coming up that you could tell us about?

VASSAR: I have a lot of people kicking [our] tires, and at least one or two them will be here, but I can't talk about it because I can't talk about it.

SALT: Anything else you'd like people to know about this place?

VASSAR: You know, when I was working for NBC, somebody asked me if I could give their dentist a tour of the studios. I said sure, and we get out on the *Today* show set; the work lights are all up, and Willard [Scott's] board is there. This is back in the days when he'd be sticking the sun and the moon on the board. So we're walking around and this couple is looking behind the sets, and I asked this *guy on the set*, "What are they looking for?"

"They're looking for the magic," he told me.

People only know what they see and to them, it's all magic. What we do here is help the people with the vision create that magic.

A short history of EUE/Screen Gems

It began in 1983, when Dino DeLaurentiis and Frank Capra, Jr. were collaborating on a film adaptation of Stephen King's novel *Firestarter*. The production needed a Southern plantation as a set, and as Jean Nance described it in her book, *Cinematic Wilmington*, it was Capra who came across a photo of Orton Plantation on the cover of *Southern Accents* magazine. They communicated with then-North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt, who flew them in his helicopter to negotiate with the Sprunt family, who owned Orton Plantation. Hollywood had come to the Cape Fear region, and in one form or another, it's been here ever since.

DeLaurentiis, through his DeLaurentiis Entertainment Group (DEG), built the facility on 23rd Street to host *Firestarter*, and went on to produce notable films like *Maximum Overdrive* (another adaptation of a work by Stephen King, who also directed the film), *Manhunter*, and *Blue Velvet*. By 1989, however, DEG Studios was bankrupt and the facility was purchased by Carolco, an independent film production company, best known for producing the *Rambo* series ('82 through '88), and later, *Total Recall* (1990), *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991), and *Basic Instinct* (1992). By 1995, thanks, in part, to a combination of bad management decisions, and the box office disaster of *Cutthroat Island*, the company was losing money, and in November of that year, it, too, filed for bankruptcy.

Enter George Cooney, a long-time Columbia Pictures executive who'd been managing the company that was formed when Columbia Pictures purchased Elliott Unger Elliot (EUE), a commercial production company in the 1960s. That company was positioned under the Screen Gems Television umbrella and branded EUE/Screen Gems. In 1983, Cooney purchased the assets of EUE/Screen Gems from the Coca-Cola Company (then owners of Columbia Pictures). Following the 1995 demise of Carolco, EUE/Screen Gems purchased the Carolco studios in 1996. They renamed it EUE/Screen Gems Studios and installed Frank Capra, Jr. as its president. Throughout this era, the Wilmington facilities were being used primarily to film "Made-for-TV" movies; twenty-two of them were filmed in 1996 alone, including a production of *The Member of the Wedding*, with Anna Paquin, and local stars like Pat Hingle and Lou Criscuolo.

By the late 1990s, Canada and its individual provinces had gotten into the film incentive business and the first productions that were lured up there were the "Made-for-TV" movies that had become a mainstay of Wilmington's film industry.

In 2002, one of EUE/Screen Gems' executive vice presidents, Bill Vassar, was asked to oversee the Wilmington facility, which he did first from New York. He moved here in 2006, and though loath to accept a lot of credit for the growth and success of the facility over the next seven years, Vassar was at the forefront of upgrade and improvement work that led to the filming of *Iron Man 3* here in 2012. The project utilized all ten of the facility's stages, and would not have been possible without the recent installation of a state-of-the-art fiber optic network that allowed the film's artists to communicate with other artists around the world.

In 2013, as *Iron Man 3* was making its way toward becoming the year's top-grossing film, the studio hosted two other major films — *We Are the Millers* and *The Conjuring* — and television productions of *Under the Dome* for CBS, *Sleepy Hollow* for Fox Television (both series have been renewed and will return to filming in Wilmington) and *Eastbound and Down* for HBO, prompting North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory to describe 2013 as one of the "strongest years experienced by the film industry in North Carolina."

The Art of Movie Watching

For the moment, things are quiet behind the scenes of the internationally acclaimed Cucalorus Film Festival. But as director Dan Brawley notes, the chaos of selecting this year's 20th anniversary entries will begin momentarily

By Jamie Lynn Miller

Photographs by Mark Steelman

On the corner of Eighth and Princess, a lone teal façade brightens the entire block. Welcome to Jengo's Playhouse, year-round Cucalorus headquarters, where a row of cheerful pink theater seats flanks the entrance. Inside, all is still. The curtains are drawn, the screen is black, and the bustle of the 2013 festival is just another sweet memory.

As winter sunshine streams through the backyard, Executive Director Dan Brawley — Wilmington native, visual artist and self-declared "minister of chaos" — takes in some fresh, apres-Cucalorus air.

He knows the peace and quiet won't last long.

The Cucalorus train is in constant motion, and Brawley, with his curly red locks and fanciful, brightly colored ties, looks every bit the conductor. "Jengo's is about experimentation, collaboration, imagination . . . all the 'tions," he says, with a smile. "I think of this kind of like a laboratory. We essentially rebuild the festival every year."

Founded in 1994 by an underground filming collective called Twinkle Doon, Cucalorus has quietly exploded into an internationally acclaimed festival that draws thousands of filmmakers, artists and underground movie buffs from around the globe to downtown Wilmington. Last year's festival, November 13–17, 2013, achieved a record-breaking attendance of nearly 15,000.

Year after year, Cucalorus brings a surge of creative energy to town — and Jengo's Playhouse is where the magic happens. The word "jengo" refers to bright ideas, illuminations — the inspiration — fostered by time spent in the Playhouse. "I swear 'jengo' is a Japanese word I read in a book somewhere," says Brawley, "(which describes) the moment the sun hits the horizon . . . when you see that first burst of color. The western equivalent would be a light bulb going off in your head.

"Actually, the magic happens over there," adds Brawley, pointing to a large magnetic white board displaying input regarding improvements, challenges and film pairings. Like pairing fine wines with gourmet foods, deciding which films should be served with others is a delicate task, especially when sifting through the festival's twenty-five to thirty daily events. "Scheduling's like a puzzle," says Brawley. "We need to hit the right films at the right time; we don't want audiences competing with each other. A few times a week, we'll spend some time just shifting around the puzzle."

Jengo's puzzle-shifters, idea folks and primary think tank is "Main Brain," a weekly brainstorming session of creative, movie-loving minds who tackle the myriad of details leading up to each year's Cucalorus and cover the white board with new perspectives. Main Brain meets Tuesday nights at 6, and it's open to any and all movie buffs. "You can check out Main Brain and decide we're all crazy," says Brawley, with a laugh. "Or you can decide, 'Yeah. These are my people.'"

"Your people" include hand-picked, sleep-deprived programmers who help screen the nearly 1,400 entries for each year's upcoming festival, and Jengo's small staff of early career film professionals, all of whom started as volunteers — including Brawley: "I joke that I showed up one day and I was the only one there. Then one day, I was in charge.

"Do we watch movies all the time?" asks Brawley, anticipating every movie buff's next question. "We did the math, and you'd have to not sleep and do nothing but watch movies for four and a half months (of the year)," he

declares. "A lot of people think it's gonna be fun, but truly, it becomes hard work." Programming candidates are reviewed, mostly filmmakers at various stages in their career, and invitations are issued to become part of that year's screening crew.

"We have twenty-five programmers all over the country, including New York City, Austin, Los Angeles . . . and we actually have two programmers in the UK," says Brawley. "We use private Vimeo links, which is good — we don't have to worry about 1,400 DVDS floating around." If you're on the Features beat, you're required to watch about fifty to sixty films; if you're assigned to Shorts (which can last anywhere from thirty seconds to thirty-nine minutes) you soak in about 200 of them. And every film gets screened at least twice.

The entirety of Jengo's "laboratory" covers about 3,500 square feet, including front offices, the theater, and a multi-colored, multi-purpose backyard. A cozy pink bungalow known as the Fox-Holden House stands at the front of the yard, just outside Jengo's back doors.

This year — the 20th Annual Cucalorus Film Festival — the recently renovated Fox-Holden House will house the newly launched filmmaker residency program. "We'll invite three filmmakers for a three- to four-month residency, so they can really dig into their projects — and we'll have a couple of people who'll extend their residency through Cucalorus," says Brawley. "It's cool for filmmakers to make a film and get actual feedback during a festival."

Across the yard is a larger house, painted yellow. Brawley lives here — on the main floor — and across the yard, an artfully-designed shanty-looking shack houses a one-bedroom cottage where visiting Cucaloreans convene. During the festival, the yard comes to life, with lights, furniture and over-sized rocking chairs, and people perched on various front porches and platforms. "(Last year) was the first year the yard was open to the public," says Brawley, referring to the festival's lineup of Jengo screenings and late-night parties, "and we had fewer problems than ever before."

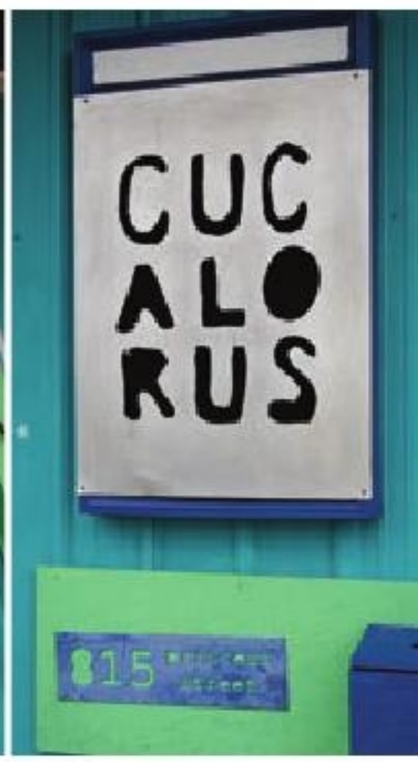
As for the rest of Jengo's year, any given day, or night? Every couple of weeks, those fifty-seven theater seats are rented out to groups like the Wrightsville Beach Longboard Association, or a summer camp for teens making music videos. "The theater is such a great space to meet for a certain type of gathering," explains Brawley. Additionally, several production companies and film professionals, including Rob Hill, DH Media and Parallelogram, work out of Jengo's — and they, too, become part of the creative process. "Whoever comes in the building, we immediately volunteer them," says Brawley.

Jengo's crew plans events like the Surfalorus Film Festival, the interactive Dance-a-Lorus, and the annual Oscar bash, one of Wilmington's most anticipated glitz-filled affairs. In conjunction with EUE/ScreenGems Studios, one of Cucalorus' most consistent supporters, this year's "Evening on the Red Carpet" will take place March 2 — same date as the Oscars.

The Cucalorus version, however, favors campy over excessively chic: "We're hoping to make it a little more cheesy than formal," Brawley says. There will be a red carpet, diligent paparazzi, and really good cocktails named after the year's nominated films.

"Best Cocktail doesn't always win Best Film."

Jamie Lynn Miller is a writer, rock climber and radio host from Aspen, Colorado. While pursuing her MFA in creative writing at UNCW, she's trading ski wax for surf wax.



John Gray (red shirt) and Mark Eaton are reviewing audio software with Dan (standing)

Paint the Town Blue

Wilmington, reimagined – as a magnet for young, trendy filmmakers

Steve Fox has a dream that one day on the charming streets of historic downtown Wilmington, bright young hipsters from around the globe will fall deeply, irrevocably in love with this city – so much so that they'll want to move here. Most of them are aspiring filmmakers. Many are budding artists. They are here, of course, because *Blue Velvet* was filmed here, and every minute detail of how it was made gives them a deeper appreciation for the twisted, 1986 cult classic they have watched and pondered again and again.

"I'm not just some crazy eccentric obsessed with a strange old movie," says Fox. "I think Wilmington should use every available means to market itself to young aspiring filmmakers and to the creative community at large. *Blue Velvet* speaks very strongly to that demographic. When you've got something as significant to modern film history as *Blue Velvet* in your catalog, you should take advantage of it."

Which is why he proposes an official *Blue Velvet* bicycle tour here in Wilmington.

Fox reels into a memory from 2005:

"I am standing outside Jengo's Playhouse on Princess Street, slipping comfortably into my unofficial roles as festival glad-handler for Cucalorus. Before me stands Jonathan Caouette, a young filmmaker whose emotionally gut-wrenching autobiographical documentary, *Tarnation*, recently put him on the map as one of the most respected artists in the film festival circuit. I am giving Jonathan a little local history, and when I mention *Blue Velvet*, Jonathan's head snaps around like a dog who caught sight of a squirrel.

'*Blue Velvet* was made here?' he asks.

'Yeah,' I said. 'You're standing three blocks from Dorothy Vallens' apartment, Arlene's Cafe is three blocks that way, and Central High, which is actually New Hanover High, is just a few blocks away on Market.'

He declared without reservation that *Blue Velvet* was his favorite movie – of all time. He had even written a musical version of the film that was performed at his high school in Texas.

Here's a guy who lives and breathes movies. He is surrounded by the living monuments of what he considers to be the most moving cinematic experience of his life, and he's only there by accident. At this moment, I begin to understand two important things. First, *Blue Velvet (BV)* is a filmmaker's film. And second, people who *should* know that *Blue Velvet* was made in Wimington *don't* know."

Suppose Wilmington became a destination for a niche of trendy young artists (Fox calls them "the critical mass") who revere *Blue Velvet* as, perhaps, one of the most inspired films ever made.

Here's how the bike tour would work:

There are nearly a dozen locations within a two-mile radius in downtown Wilmington that any true *BV* fan would recognize from the movie. The tour would be self-guided, with a QR code at each site.

"Participants would be able to scan the code and have access to a treasure trove of site-specific information," says Fox, including scripts, call sheets, still photos, makeup and continuity photos, and construction drawings.

Perhaps you'd like to experience it for yourself. Join us for a virtual, unofficial tour of what this vision might look like. And if you make it to Barbary Coast – Fox suggests it as the final stop – you might consider celebrating with a cold PBR.

Steve Fox, who first saw Blue Velvet *at the Janus Theater in Greensboro in 1986, can be reached at sfox@ec.rr.com.*

Carolina Apartments, 420 Market Street

The Deep River apartments were home to Isabella Rossellini's character, Dorothy Vallens. Dorothy's apartment was supposedly on the seventh floor of this six-story building. The interior was actually a set built on Stage 3 at EUE/Screen Gems Studios.

LOCALE PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVEN C. FOX AND ERIN PIKE

Flying Pi Kitchen, 402 Chestnut Street

Here, at Arlene's Diner, Jeffrey Beaumont (Kyle Maclachlan) talked Sandy Williams (Laura Dern) into helping him gain entry into Dorothy Vallens' apartment.

New Hanover High School, 1307 Market Street

At Central High School, Jeffrey tooled up in his red Delta 88 convertible to pick up Sandy while her football-player boyfriend watched from the practice field.

1916 Princess Street

This is the house from the scene where Jeffrey Beaumont and Sandy Williams dance at a high school party. There must be a handful of locals who were extras in this scene.

109 Keaton Avenue

For Jeffrey Beaumont's house, Director David Lynch left the décor exactly as he found it – ceramic figurines, doilies and all. During filming, several neighbors set up lawn chairs across the street to watch the scenes unfold. Here, true fans recall, is where Dorothy Vallens appears nude.

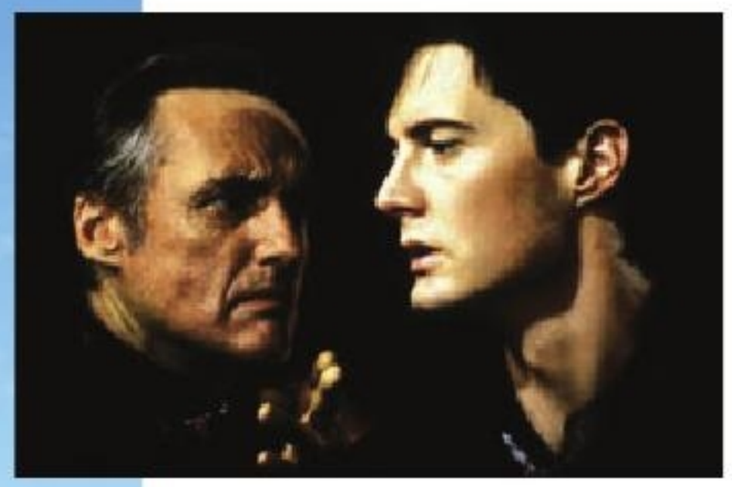
128 Northern Boulevard

Welcome to Sandy Williams' house in Sunset Park. Benedict Fancy, director of the documentary in progress, *It's a Strange World, The Filming of Blue Velvet*, lives just a few blocks away. Search "It's a Strange World — The Filming of Blue Velvet" on Facebook to learn more about the documentary.

Winnie's Tavern, 1895 Burnett Boulevard

You're looking at the exterior of The Slow Club. There were a couple of shoots of Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper) and his gang coming out the club and driving off in Frank's Dodge Charger. When Jeffrey Beaumont returns to Dorothy Vallens' apartment the second time she invites him in, they express an affection for one another, and he goes to see her sing again at The Slow Club. Frank and his gang are there. They leave peeling out of the gravel driveway and Jeffrey follows them to Frank's lair in the industrial building on Marsteller Street. Fun fact: Director David Lynch was fascinated to discover that the owners of Winnie's Tavern had been pitching their bottle caps out into the driveway for years. The parking area is still carpeted with ancient flattened bottle caps.

LOCALE PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVEN C. FOX AND ERIN PIKE



101 Marstellar Street

Having discovered Frank Booth's lair, Jeffrey Beaumont cases the joint by setting up a camera in a box on his dashboard, real undercover spy stuff. He photographs Frank as the "Well-Dressed Man," meeting with "The Yellow Man" who is Wilmington's own Fred Pickler. Pickler once served as mayor of Carolina Beach, and used to sell police equipment for Smith & Wesson. He met with David Lynch and the production staff about guns to be used as props, and they asked him to be "The Yellow Man." Pickler does a lot of business in Germany and he says he still gets recognized from the film. He says they call him *der gelbe Mann*.

Beaumont's Hardware, 604 Front Street

Blue Velvet fans recognize this building as Beaumont's Hardware. Although Pike's Hardware is now defunct, the Pikes, who still live in town, say movie fans used to show up just to walk around the store.

LOCALE PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVEN C. FOX AND ERIN PIKE

The Roudabush Building, corner of Front and Dock Streets.

The third floor of the Roudabush building was used as the interior of Ben's Place. There's a scene in *Blue Velvet* where Brad Dourif is dancing around with a dead snake. The story goes that someone drove by on Front Street and tossed a lady's purse out of the car and into the drain during filming. Lynch got the crew to fish it out. And there was the dead snake inside. So they used it in the scene.

Barbary Coast, 116 South Front Street

This is it! Ben's Place. The neon sign is still there, where Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper) emphatically professes his preference for domestic lagers. The owner says they still sell more PBRs than any bar on the east coast.

Fish

A Short Story by Jill McCorkle

When you learn that you are dying, you take off your glasses and never wear them again. I think that you don't want to see the looks on our faces as we sit here by your bed. I think you want only the blurry outlines of our warm bodies bending and whispering, stroking your face here at the end when they say the senses of touch and hearing are what remain.

The woman who nursed you as a 2-year-old with pneumonia sixty-odd years ago has come to be with you, hold your hand, speak softly about what a fine boy you have always been. We know your story about her and how you've always been sure she was the reason you had survived.

I picture that long-ago scene, you on a little cot in the upstairs hallway, your siblings in the rooms on either side. Two older brothers in one room. Two older sisters in the other. There had been another child, a stillbirth the year before you were born, and there were stories of deformities and how it was a life that was never meant to be. You said that as a child you thought often how your partner had died and worried that you would share his fate, that your life also was never meant to be. When I picture your childhood bed, your little boy face from old photos, the corner of a house I remember well though it was torn down a long time ago, I see you sweaty and shivering, and a young version of this very old woman by your side, whispering words of love and kindness.

"Oh, Honey," she says and then turns away from your bed.

We all know that she can't save you this time.

When the doctor told you that you were dying, you paused and then said, "I am 64 years old and I have had a good life." You have not mentioned death since, except to say that you will be sorry to miss all the events in the lives of your grandchildren: recitals, ballgames, graduations, weddings. Jeannie's son, the oldest at 11, cannot leave your side; he sits and repeats back to you all the stories you began making up for him when he was barely 2. We are surprised that he remembers with such detail, but he doesn't want us to listen. It is a secret he shares with you. You have given each of the grandchildren a secret story or joke at some time or another. They all take turns leaning in to kiss you, to whisper, to make you smile. Now you ask that I hold up the baby. "Hold him way up high," you tell me. "I want to see his whole body."

You were terrified of the water, but you loved to step into it, chest deep, pool edge within reach. This was your metaphor for life. Nearby I dove, an extension of your limbs. I spiraled and flipped and you held your breath and cheered silently, one hand raised in victory, as I paddled my way back to you.

And we fished, hip deep, waves lapping, surf pulling. You warned me about the undertow, the whirlpools, the stingrays and jellyfish that appeared so benign. And when I caught what we called the toadfish with its sharp serrated teeth and spiny jagged gills, you gave up and simply cut the line from the bloody hook wedged too deep within his mouth to reclaim. Poor old guy, you said as he twisted and flopped against the current, his girlfriend is going to be so disappointed tonight. You laughed, but I knew from the sadness in your eyes that you understood disappointment better than most. I asked if he was going to live and you said oh, sure.

He'll have to stay home from school, you said, nudging me with the pun. But just think of the fish tales he'll have for his children and grandchildren. He will always be the one that got away.

On your last day, Mom, Jeannie and I sit by your bed and sing all of your favorite songs: "When You're Smiling," "I Can't Get Started," "Blue Moon." You stare vacantly upward, your eyes dry and frozen. Blink, we say. If you can hear us, just blink.

When I went off to college you offered advice.

1) If you get a flat, do not stop until you can pull into a well lit, public place. Drive it on the rim if you have to.

2) When you go to a party — if you have to go to a party — fix your own drink — if you have to have a drink. Guard and protect it the whole while just as you do yourself. An unopened beer is always a good choice.

3) You are never too old to come home and it is never too late to call your parents to come and get you.

And when I needed to come home, you came to get me. Terrified of flying, you flew, white knuckled, sweaty. And you worried the whole time we loaded everything I owned — not much — and drove out to the interstate in our rental car. We both smoked then and that's what we did all the way home. We played the radio, gave each other an occasional high five or victory sign, and revved our bodies with enough nicotine to go the whole long distance without stopping for the night. The trunk was crammed with things I had owned most of my life — quilts and books, stuffed animals and a rusty three-speed bike that had not worked right since it had gotten stolen and then returned in college. The backseat was filled with foreign items: some of the wedding gifts still in their original packing — crystal and china and tiny fancy dishes I had never known what to do with. "We all make mistakes," you said every hour or so. "And you're young," you added. "Your whole life is ahead of you."

And now I'm over 40 and soon will give your advice to my own children. I have cans of Fix a Flat. I have a jack and a spare, flares, thermal blankets, change for a phone call. I always lock my doors. I don't get in a car without glancing into the backseat. I do not go shopping at night by myself, even during the holidays when the parking lots are crowded. I only drink beer in the bottle and I know that I am still not too old to call, just that it's not so easy these days.

I'll tell you something new, something you might not remember. It was during a summer vacation at Ocean Drive. Remember the little white cottage where we stayed on the bottom floor several years in a row? Young boys sold Krispy Kreme doughnuts door-to-door. Our upstairs neighbor greased his old (you weren't even 40 then) body in olive oil and whistled "Red Red Robin" so loud and so often that we all began to exist in that rhythm. There were raft rentals and sno-cones, sand and salt. Jeannie said we should write a note and bury it; she was 9 and I was 5. She said she had to do the writing. The note said: "It is 1963. We are the Miller sisters. We are two kids from Fulton, who are visiting South Carolina and some day when we are very old, we will return to dig this up and remember the day." She said that when we returned we would drive Cadillac convertibles and live in mansions with handsome husbands. I added that we would have lots of fluffy puppies and kittens and she said she wrote that part down, too, though I couldn't be sure because it was in cursive. You had just told me — in reference to something I didn't remember — that it happened before my eyes were open, and I was still under the impression that people, like kittens, were born without vision.

But what I do remember is a can of red Play-doh and how we had barely arrived and unpacked when I rolled and pressed the clay into the braided rug of

the rental cottage. It got stuck there, a sticky mess, and I got in trouble. I rubbed ice cubes over the spot, rubbing and pulling every little speck. And isn't it odd? I knew even as I sat there, rubbing and picking, that I would never forget, that I would think of it often. That I would grow up to believe that rectifying a mistake is sometimes reason enough to exist.

Your father made his living carving up dead barnyard bodies — cows, lambs, pigs. Your child's eye made no connection between those bloody slabs hanging on hooks and the pet goat you kept in your backyard. You may not have connected the red of his eyes to repossessed furniture and your mother's sad anger. You only said nice things and we grew up to love him, so much so that I fell in love with a boy who smelled like him only to later realize that the treasured memory I carried of your father was one of straight bourbon and cigarette gone to ash.

When you were late for school, you told the teacher the goat got loose, that you chased him for blocks on end. This was a teacher you adored, the same teacher who over thirty years later would also teach us, regularly confusing us with Mom, asking with a teasing grin if we were still sweet on you. The goat was your pet. That part was true. But what you really did on those days you hooked school was wander downtown and shoot pool in a dark ancient room where you stood and stared out. Your eyes were always drawn to the light. How frightened you must have been the first time you could not find any light at all. The times your heart was so heavy you could not rise up from the bed. Now if you told your story, others would step forward with their own. Now, there are articles and books, more than you could ever read, miraculous medicines that take emotionally paralyzed people and bring them back to life. But not then. Then it seemed you were all alone with your fears and worries. And there were many people willing to let you believe that, to believe that your overwhelming sense of loss and sadness made you less of a man. It changed the way that I looked at a lot of people. Though told to respect my elders, I often did not. It was hard to respect ignorance and harder still to respect those who knew better but still offered nothing.

You must have seen us standing there those times, children who were afraid to move too far from where you were, even though it was summer beyond the windows of your bedroom and kids from the neighborhood called our names to come out and play tag or hide and go seek, to mount our bikes and take out after the mosquito truck. How shocking it must have been to look down from your hospital window that time and see us there in our Easter dresses waiting for you to come home. We were too young to visit inside, so you came out into the sunlight still wearing a light blue robe and navy terrycloth slippers. You stayed long enough for us to hug and hold onto you while you repeated how sorry you were, sorry that you had to be there. And after you went back inside the tall brick building, one of the adults told me to count up the windows until I got to the fifth floor, that you said you would be there to watch us drive away. I couldn't see you — the windows were caged and dark — but we waved anyway.

You had bought a card for us in the hospital gift shop and we opened it in the car. It was a happy card with ducks and bunnies and chickens, a card about love and joy and the birth of spring. It made us sad. The only resurrection I cared about was yours.

Animals were my closest friends then; cats, dogs — ours, the neighbors'; wild skinny strays that I would offer bits of food in hopes of taming. You loved to talk about animals. Your childhood cat, Smoky Mac, once stuck his head in a jar, ears held back in curiosity, as his whiskered nose bumped glass. Then he was alert, ears pricked and raised. And he found he could not get loose. He could not get his breath. He ran like wild, heavy jar tight like a helmet and you, a boy no older than 9 or 10, chased after him. You caught his wild body and pinned him down. You cracked the jar with a rock so he could breathe and though he hissed and scratched, and though he did not come home until the next day, he knew to be grateful. He sat near you whenever he could. He never scratched you or stuck his head in a jar again.

When you come home from the hospital this time, we know that it is the beginning of the end. We know that you will no longer sleep in your own bed, but in one that is equipped with bars and an IV line, an oxygen tube. We will come to rely on the hospice workers who come and go throughout the day.

When you came home that other time, it felt like life was starting again. You were young and had many years ahead of you. There was hope. Your dad arrived in a taxi and sat quietly with his hat on his lap; he wanted to say things but he didn't know how. In less than a year, he would not be able to say anything at all, a stroke and throat cancer having left him to stare out at the end of his life. On one of those afternoons, I went with you to visit him in the hospital, but again, I was not allowed inside. The adults took turns going in so that someone stayed with me under the huge trees where I fed the squirrels, so fat and friendly that they came and sat right in front of me and begged. I asked you to read to me, and you said that you would, but could we please read something other than *The Little Match Girl*. But that was the one I wanted; I wanted to cry. I liked to cry. It had become a kind of hobby, this need to imagine myself or someone I loved taken away. I had to prepare myself. Even now, I feel that's what I'm doing — every word, every image is a match struck in an attempt to hold on.

On the afternoon you die, we keep asking for a sign, a blink, a twitch. We sing "All of Me," "Today," "Moon River." And when it is finally time, Jeannie and I both know at the same moment. We feel it, a static tension in the air, and we communicate it without words, rushing to get Mom to come in from outside where she has finally agreed to go for a rest, rushing to bring your brother to be by your side. And when you take your last breath, you blink — one strong blink, and then you are gone.

Now I have dreams. One takes place in our old backyard. The swing-set casts long-legged shadows toward the house. I pull you up on a swing, tie your arms to the chains to hold you upright. Your head slumps down. You wear the robe of a sick man and I sit beside you, watching and waiting. I am a kid, my hair cropped short, my knees scabbed, my feet bare. My swing creaks back and forth while yours stays perfectly still. And then the people come. A steady stream of strangers passing, looking, nudging, whispering. You are a sick little girl, they say. Sick to sit and hold onto the dead.

But, I say, he's not. He is not dead.

Over and over, I argue and then dusk comes and all the people go away. It is almost dark and we are all alone and you lift your head and look at me, your eyes a blue-gray I had almost forgotten. You wink. Point your finger and wink. You're right, you say. I am not dead.

Your dad had an old collie he called Bruno, a black and white creature he walked to the corner store every afternoon. He was retired but he still liked the smell of cold cuts. He liked the way the little market still had a floor covered in sawdust and plenty of bones stashed away for Bruno. This is how I remember your father. Small and neat with a hat he politely tipped at everyone he passed. He held my hand when we crossed the street. His eyes were the same color as yours. This is the man I knew, not the troubled one of your childhood, not the one who stumbled out in front of the bleachers at a high school football game where you sat in the middle of a warm flock of kids, Mom's smooth young hand held firmly in your own. And without a word, you rose to your full height and made your way through the crowd. You never thought to do anything except to carry him home. And if this single act were all I ever knew of you, it would be more than enough.

Now I dream you are in the mirror, bathrobe loosely tied, arms outstretched. I know with the strange knowledge dreams allow that you cannot speak. All the energy you can gather is used to shape your image. And one by one we enter the room. And one by one we ask, do you see? In the room there are three of us left to mourn and grieve. In the mirror we are a family of four — a simple image of thousands of days. You sign to us with arms reaching "You" and then, hands pressed firmly to your chest, "are my heart." Hands criss crossing, a shake of the head. "That's all that there is."

You actually spoke these very words near the end, when your eyes were still able to blink. Tiny tear, cool saliva. You are my heart, that's all that there is. And on a later day nearer the end, your eyes dry and frozen in that distant stare, I leaned in close and whispered, I'll be looking for you.

On the night of March 8, 2014, in the Lumina Theatre at UNCW, Jill McCorkle will be among three great American writers interviewed by Clyde Edgerton for Wilmington's first annual BooksmARTS. For more information visit www.artscouncilofwilminton.org.

Second Place — Best Reader Memoirs 2014

The Snow

Nature, which never deigned to notice my street, made up for it one magical winter night

STORY AND PAINTING BY HELEN SHALFI

Snow falls steadily
On the graves of our forgotten ancestors,
Its heavy silence,
Like the heartbeat of the universe.

I was born, healthy and beautiful (at least to my parents), the first child of a happily married young couple. One thing dimmed their joy: I was not a boy. However, within three years that wrinkle was smoothed when my brother was born.

I was instructed to be proud to be the big sister of the family scion. In those days, any boy could become president, or even a doctor, but girls were different. To my parents, free thinkers in other ways, a girl was a necessary evil on the road to boydom. Before I got older and rebelled, I accepted this. When asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I said, "the president's wife." I was in kindergarten.

There is a family photo which shows me and my parents, dressed in our finest, standing around a table where my baby brother lies comfortably, smiling at the camera. A half century later, that moment is still fresh; the pride I felt (as instructed), the endless fussing about him possibly falling off the table, and the strain to keep smiling for the camera.

He was a genius; we suspected, but it wasn't confirmed until age 12 that his IQ surpassed 160. As a young child, though, he had problems; he stuttered, he was short and quiet, and he was bullied. I, on the other hand, was tall and strong. My mother fretted and kept him with her in the house, but she sent me out every single day. I was expected to fend for myself. We lived in a safe neighborhood, but it was still New York City.

"Is the sun out?" she'd say. "Then go out and get some fresh air."

"Stay in front of the house," she would add. Or, occasionally, "Stay on the stoop."

After school and on weekends, I was banished from her presence, forced to stay out till dark.

Compared with our tiny three-room apartment that faced an alley, the street was not so bad. Six-story brick apartment buildings lined the block, and in my building alone there were scores of children. When other kids were out, we jumped rope or played ring-a-lievio, but when there was nobody, like that Sunday morning it snowed, it was a kind of torture to be anchored to one lonely spot. I became keenly observant and highly imaginative. I knew every detail of the ornate entrance to the large building across the street and constructed elaborate scenarios about the people going in and out.

That morning, when it had finally stopped snowing, I stepped out of the dark lobby onto the street, and I was transfixed.

The snow; the snow was everywhere. The whole universe was startlingly bright. There were no things; houses, cars, sidewalks were subsumed in an other-worldly whiteness. Even the sky was a translucent shell. Not a person in sight, no sound of cars, no chirp of birds, just an eerie quiet.

I gasped at the frigid air, so cold it had a physical presence. How could life sustain itself in this cold? I was frightened. If I stepped too close, I could vanish within the whiteness of the ten-foot snowbanks, and no one would know. With trepidation, I went back to the apartment.

When she saw me, she exclaimed, "Did you put rouge on your face?"

I had heard this before; I was only 8 and wasn't even sure what rouge was. Appearances were important if you were a girl; feelings, not so much. Didn't she care that it was freezing?

"It's too cold and there's nobody outside," I implored.

But she was adamant. "Is the sun out?"

There was no refuting that, so back to the stoop I trudged.

It was the first New York blizzard in fifty years. I loved to draw, and had just decided to become an artist.

Resigned to my fate, I surveyed the scene.

Every surface glittered with bright crystals that stabbed the eye. Overnight, the noisy, dingy world of constant movement had been transformed into a silent dream, a scene from a fairy tale. Even the air, suddenly sweet, had a life of its own, and as I inhaled, it felt as if this was my first true breath. Nature, who never deigned to notice my street, was making up for her oversight. Enthralled, I remained perfectly still, awash with intense sensations of delight, surprise, and awe. I knew someday I would try to paint that feeling.

After a while, though, perhaps half an hour, everything changed. That bright, glowing world became mottled with darkness. I saw spots of red and green. In that wonder-world of newness, I doubted all sensations, but something was wrong. Still, I hesitated to go back and incur my mother's wrath.

Finally, I could take no more; I was going blind! The best experience of my life had become the worst. How could I become an artist now? What would become of my life? Frantically, I ran into the building, to my apartment, knowing the way without seeing.

Mom explained that it was snow blindness caused by the swelling of the capillaries in the eye. She had me rest my eyes and made some hot chocolate. It seemed to take forever to restore my sight, but sitting in the tiny kitchen, with my mother bustling around me, I knew I had won a reprieve; I wouldn't have to go out again that day.

Over the years, I've learned that the human heart is fickle, but that great beating heart is always there for me, nurturing my hungry artist's eye with rainbows and sunsets, ethereal ground fogs, the ocean's myriad colors, nighttime mysteries of woods and sky, and always the trees, delicate and powerful, in full leaf or standing tall and strong, proud to bear their burden of snow.

Helen Shalfi is an art instructor at Brunswick Community College and a member of the Wilmington Art Association.

Gonzo's Place

An inconsistent tide of life brought librarian Sara Allen to Wilmington – and home to the Muppet Boarding House that delights so many Port City children

By Ashley Wahl · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

Among the architectural gems that dot historic North Seventh Street, the Queen Anne at 219 boasts an especially colorful past. Colorful as in animated. Animated as in former Muppet House.

When Sara Allen checked into the Camellia Cottage Bed and Breakfast in November 2009 – her first visit to Wilmington – she was looking for a beach house. What she found – and fell in love with – was the historic Fennell-Crump House (c. 1897), a decorative showcase of Victorian elegance with a turreted porch and a fresh coat of vibrant blue paint. But locals didn't call it the Fennell-Crump House. After the creatives behind the locally filmed movie *Muppets from Space* (1999) re-imagined 219 North Seventh Street on the big screen, the house beyond the dog-eared picket fence and picturesque spindlework porch would forever afterward be the Muppet House.

The movie, a Jim Henson Pictures production directed by Tim Hill, was shot at EUE/Screen Gems Studios here in Wilmington. Although considered a theatrical flop, reviews were mixed. *Los Angeles Times* called it "smart" and "winning," with "more plot than the last four Muppet films combined." Kermit and friends are the shining stars, but the cast includes the likes of Jeffrey Tambor, Pat Hingle, Rob Schneider and Andie MacDowell, with cameo appearances from F. Murray Abraham, David Arquette, Josh Charles, Kathy Griffin, Hulk Hogan, Ray Liotta, and fresh-faced *Dawson's Creek* stars Katie Holmes and Joshua Jackson.

"It really is kind of fun," says Sara, a retired librarian who graciously lends her copy to friends and neighbors upon request.

Unlike most Muppet films, *Muppets from Space* centers around Gonzo, a self-proclaimed misfit who, after a series of adventures and misadventures, discovers what it truly means to belong.

"I relate to that," says Sara.

Recalling the years before her parents split, Sara conjures up idyllic images of a Pennsylvania farmhouse with a long, meandering driveway and a nearby pond that froze over in the snowy winters. There were animals – a dog called Huck and a couple of cats – and her fondest memories include ice-skating with the neighbors and learning how to swim.

"Things loom a lot larger in your memory," says Sara, describing the rambling house on the hilltop, and how, at age 8, her world felt as if it were tearing at the seams when she was forced to leave her perfect world.

"My brothers and I moved with my mom back to her hometown in Georgia," says Sara. "As soon as I could go away to school, I went away."

By age 15, Sara was enrolled at Ashley Hall, an all-girls boarding school (now a day school) in Charleston, South Carolina. She found comfort in the salty air, but home was where her mother was, so she often went back to visit.

"She was fantastic," says Sara of her mother, the woman who, among her many interests, had an infectious passion for classical music and the Atlantic Ocean.

"We would go to my grandmother's beach house (in Daytona Beach) every summer, which was the highlight of our year," says Sara.

Among Sara's most treasured memories are lazy days combing the beach with her grandmother — right up there with the Pennsylvania summer her mother taught her how to swim.

"There's a constancy about being on the beach and next to the ocean that just makes me feel at home," says Sara.

Despite life's inconstant tide, their trips to Daytona continued until her grandmother died during Sara's senior year of college.

"The (beach) house was sold," says Sara, so she and her mother found a place in Litchfield, South Carolina, to serve as their summer getaway for the next twenty-five years.

For years, Sara lived in Atlanta, where she worked as a law librarian for the Coca-Cola Company. When her mother fell ill in 2001, she returned to small-town Georgia to be with her.

And when her mother died, Sara lived there alone.

"I knew I wanted to be somewhere near the beach," she says. And so the hunt began. She drove to Wilmington and set out to explore Southport, Wrightsville, Kure Beach, New Bern and Morehead City. It was late autumn. She was living in the Muppet House by spring.

In the opening scene of the movie, a dream scene that alters the Genesis flood narrative, the storm is coming and Gonzo is frantically trying to board the ark.

"What is your species?" asks the stern and grizzly Noah.

Gonzo panics.

"I don't know . . . I guess there's only one of me."

When Gonzo awakens from this reccurring nightmare, he is back in the Muppet Boarding House where he shares a bunk bed with Rizzo the Rat. He then stares out the window into star-studded infinity, presumably until morning. In the next frame, daylight reveals the fanciful exterior of 219 North Seventh Street, a yellow-green clapboard home with a fantastical corner tower and a funky "witch's hat" porch turret. In many ways, the house is a

reflection of Gonzo's one-of-a-kind appearance. More profoundly, it echoes his bold and unconventional spirit.

"When friends find out that I live in the Muppet House, they often make a special trip to come and see it, especially if they've got grandkids from out of town," says Sara.

While it is her understanding that the interior of the house was gutted and restored by "the movie people," it is not, in fact, featured in the film. And if you expect the inside of her house to look anything like the inside of the Muppet Boarding House, think again. For starters, there are far fewer Muppets.

"Gonzo came with the house," says Sara of the blue puppet sitting in the upstairs window which, in the movie, was hidden behind the fanciful corner tower. She added the other Muppets, each of whom is displayed in the "Muppet window" for his or her assigned time. Rotation happens at the first of every month. Throughout the year, they appear in this order: Animal, Fozzie, Gonzo, Kermit, Piggy and Rizzo.

"I'm a librarian," Sara politely reminds guests.

In the movie, the Muppet House is as dated as the soundtrack ('60s and '70s soul/funk), with patterned wallpaper and retro furniture from room to room. In Sara's house, with its soaring ceilings and shiny hardwood

floors, walls are pale yellow and soft ocean blue with crisp white wainscoting to make the house look bright and breezy. One look at the vinyl library in the foyer reveals that the music here is mostly classical.

"Those belonged to my mother," she says of an extensive opera collection. "I've added some rock 'n' roll to the mix."

Lace curtains for the bay windows in the sunny front parlor look like the ones Kermit peeked behind while watching Gonzo mow a late-night message in the lawn (the cosmic fish told him to do it), but the view here is of the white wicker porch furniture and a blue-roofed birdhouse that echoes the shape of the porch turret. And while the Muppets gathered round a cluttered table with mix-and-match plates, in Sara's dining room, where succulent plants thrive beneath a vintage wall mirror, a round white table is set with the floral-patterned china that belonged to Sara's grandmother. She loves her custom kitchen with warm granite counters and stainless appliances — no Swedish Chef.

Upstairs, sentimental family photos line the mantel in the library, which is stocked with classic novels and various scripts.

"I love sitting up here," says Sara of a writer's desk situated in front of the bay window. "It's like Yertle the Turtle. You can survey everything."

Gonzo sits in the Muppet window with a stuffed bichon frise that resembles her deceased pet, Beckett.

"I miss my little guy," says Sara.

In the hallway, which leads to the guest room and master suite, framed drawings of the "Boarding House Exterior" show the house before and after its movie makeover.

"Those were here when I bought the house," says Sara.

Muppet mementos aside, her favorite exhibits include wire sculptures by local artist Michael Van Hout and her grandmother's shell collection.

Retired life near the beach is sweet. Here, she can kick back, lounge in the sleeper porch hammock with a good book, or, occasionally, sink into the plush leather couch in the front parlor and watch *Muppets from Space*.

"Wilmington is my home," says Sara. "I love the downtown community, and I love living in this house. I have never felt more at home anywhere than right here."

The Greensman Cometh

In a world of cinematic illusion, Tim Taylor's custom-made landscapes are beguilingly real – sometimes

By Barbara Sullivan

If you're a movie enthusiast who also happens to be an avid gardener, you may have trouble keeping your mouth shut. Just as the ax murderer is sneaking around the corner of the house, getting ready to chop up the babysitter, you lean over to your friend and whisper, "How could those lilacs be blooming in the backyard now? That's ridiculous. It's supposed to be September."

Who knew there was an entire profession that takes care of these things so the rest of us can sit back and enjoy the movie? They're called greensmen, and Tim Taylor is a lead greensman, plant wrangler and imaginary garden creator extraordinaire. He calls New Orleans home, but he travels the country creating what he calls "fakescapes" for the movies. This past November he spoke with *Salt* magazine while he was working in Wilmington for the Fox series *Sleepy Hollow*. A tall, fit man who dresses in sturdy work clothes suitable for shoveling mulch and digging in the dirt, he's perhaps most recognizable by his neatly trimmed goatee and handlebar mustache.

Tim fell into this 70-hour-a-week, all-consuming passion almost by accident. One day, staring out an attic window in the upscale River Oaks section of Houston, bored with his job installing home insulation, he watched as a landscaping crew turned a neighboring yard from ordinary into magical. With zero prior experience, he applied for a job with the landscaper that day and learned enough over time to eventually set up his own eight-man team. For seventeen years he designed, installed and maintained serious gardens in New Orleans, Houston and Austin – everything from formal French style parterres, to English cottage gardens, children's gardens, kitchen gardens, and interpretive landscapes for historical buildings.

One day in 2007, when *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* was filming in New Orleans and needed an access road built across a swamp, Tim and his bulldozer obliged. Within two years, he'd done enough work for the movies to transition to a full-time job as a greensman. He now has twenty-seven

Ichabod Crane (Tom Mison) searches a colonial-era house which holds secrets in the "Sanctuary" episode of SLEEPY HOLLOW. Photograph © 20th. Century Fox Television/Brownie Harris

productions to his credit.

Whenever his schedule permits, he jumps at the chance to work with one of the legendary greensmen like Jeff DeBell out of Los Angeles, whom he considers his mentor, or Dave Tureau, who is based out of New Orleans. Recently he worked with a crew of thirty-four greensmen on *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes*, helping to create a San Francisco inundated with vines and overrun by Mother Nature. Whatever production he works on, he has the depth of knowledge to have the right plant blooming at the right time of year and in the appropriate ecosystem. The audience can relax.

The first thing he'll tell you is that it's a team effort. The four departments working under the aegis of the art director and production designer work hand-in-glove with one another. Plasterers, scenics and prop makers coordinate with the greens team to bring the vision to life. As the lead greensman, Tim relies on the strengths of the men and women on his crew, whether it's someone with advanced horticultural knowledge helping with plant selection, a master chainsaw operator harvesting trees, or an on-set greensman positioning and repositioning the greenery exactly where the camera needs it, as many times as it takes.

When he travels to each new location, Tim brings along his own kit of chainsaws, leaf blowers, wheelbarrows, camouflage nets and dozens of gardening tools. On location, when the need arises, he can work all the big machinery — backhoes, bulldozers, Bobcats, scissor lifts and lulls. Once he's arrived, he begins collecting the greenery and fakery he'll need to do his work.

The greens kingdom on the Screen Gems lot runs the gamut from the gritty to the elegant, the living to the dead, the real to the fake, the gigantic to the miniature. Sizable mulch piles keep company with mounds of sand and dirt, large plastic trash bags full of dead leaves sorted according to species, piles of branches, twigs, bare trees screwed into stabilizing bases, and hundreds of yards of vines. Vines, especially on the *Sleepy Hollow* set, are vital to the creepy factor. The more twisted the plant material the better. Tim is thrilled to come upon an old nurse log thick with moss, a sculptural piece of driftwood or a fallen branch, weathered and skeletal, its bony protrusions reminiscent of an emaciated witch's arm. Each one is a greensman's dream.

In a warehouse he keeps texturized rubber "dirt" mats to camouflage the odd manhole cover; camo cloths to drape over large immovable objects like telephone poles or twenty-foot saw palmettos, which don't fit into the story locale. He and his crew rummage through stacks of cardboard boxes printed with Latin and common names for plants like ipomea batata (sweet potato vine), acer rubrum (red leaf maple), and hedera helix (common ivy). They grab sprigs, bouquets, branches and tendrils of fake greenery to construct an imaginary world of jungle, desert, rain forest, swamp, prairie, seashore, mountain glen or whatever the story calls for. To modulate the fake greenery — too-bright, too-shiny, colors-not-found-in nature — Tim sends it off to the scenics to be toned down with matte paint, emphasizing darker tones including blacks and browns. The fakes will always be mixed in with real plant material, the so-called "realz," so that, ideally, they'll disappear from sight. Tim's goal is to use 95 percent realz and 5 percent fakes.

In another corner of the warehouse lie boxes of soft green mosses, harvested from dark, damp places, cut into rectangular mats and touched up with green spray paint. They can survive just about indefinitely until the greensmen need to glue them onto the sides of an "abandoned fountain" or the face of an "ancient gravestone." Tim has them rip the moss into jagged, irregular shapes — very little in nature grows in straight lines.

For *Sleepy Hollow*, he bought an entire plant nursery from the departing production of *Under the Dome*. The nursery sits on its own small bit of real estate on the Screen Gems lot, a built-in irrigation system keeping it alive through the sweltering Wilmington summer. Row upon row of Leland cypress, hibiscus, maples, sycamores, juniper and mandevilla as well as dozens of wax myrtle and ligustrum stand at attention waiting to be trucked to the next shoot.

When he needs additional plant materials, Tim works with local nurseries like The Transplanted Garden, Five Oaks and Tinga. To supplement this, he and his crew harvest "invasives" from property where they have permission: wisteria, smilax (a twining asparagus), muscadine, wax myrtle, yaupon and tallow tree. These plants will overrun a backyard with their vigorous, spreading root systems, but for the greens team they're precious materials, especially good for filling in and camouflaging.

Tim also haunts construction sites in search of the unlovely and rejected — a four-foot diameter tree stump in the shape of a triceratops head, for example, or mangled and tangled clots of roots and vines. With any luck he'll encounter trees that have just come under the buzz of the chainsaw. He'll load them onto his truck and put them to work in the movies.

"When greens are done well," says Tim, "you don't notice them." The idea is to keep the audience's attention focused where it should be — on the action. Greens are used to cover electrical junction boxes, mail boxes, parking meters, the enticing but obtrusive lingerie store window at the mall — whatever doesn't serve the story.

Occasionally the reverse is needed. In one episode of *The Vampire Diaries*, for example, a bewitched tree took center stage. Tim and his team cut a spiral groove all the way up the trunk of a large tree and along each of the branches and, within this spiral channel, snaked flexible gas lines. These were then plastered over and covered with bark. Then began the labor-intensive task of "silking out" the tree by attaching fake branches and leaves to every one of the real branches. Silking out a large tree can take up to a week. Doing this outdoors in winter for a summer scene can be brutal. For this particular tree, the effort paid off when the witch cast a powerful spell, and flames burst obligingly from every limb, branch and twig simultaneously.

For *Sleepy Hollow*, Tim and his crew worked movie magic on a garden plot behind a Georgian brick home in Winnabow, making a new, fantasy garden come and go like something out of a fairy tale. Imagine a (fake) formal eighteenth century garden complete with stone pathways, fountains and statuary featuring pyramidally shaped Nellie Stevens hollies and straight rows of clipped ligustrum. Fast-forward 200-plus years to the present day where the story requires the garden to be neglected and overrun. The bones of the garden will still be there, barely visible under the weeds, brambles and saplings that have colonized every inch of dirt. Vines have muscled their way up the brick and into the eaves, and the negative spirit inhabiting the house has sent out thousands of roots which engulf the building. For filming purposes, the greensmen were required to start with the overgrown, spooky garden, dismantle it, install the formal 1700s landscaping, then re-establish the neglected garden a second time. A four-day, thirteen-hour-a-day, six-person miracle.

One of his more interesting greens challenges? Finding the right size leaf to hide the private parts of a male actor in *The Vampire Diaries*. Who knew? From a forty-foot burning tree to a single sycamore leaf, this is the world of an imaginary garden artist: Hectic, demanding, and never dull.

A new evil comes to Sleepy Hollow in the "Sanctuary" episode of SLEEPY HOLLOW. Photograph © 20th. Century Fox Television/Brownie Harris

PURVEYOR, BUYER & APPRAISER OF FINE AND ESTATE JEWELLERY

229 NE BROAD STREET · SOUTHERN PINES, NC · (910) 692-0551 · IN-HOUSE REPAIRS

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER LEANN AND WHITNEY PARKER LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU TO WHITLAUTER.

ALMANAC

February

By Noah Salt

New feet within my garden go,
New fingers stir the sod;
A troubadour upon the elm
Betrays the solitude.

New children play upon the green,
New weary sleep below;
And still the pensive spring returns,
And still the punctual snow!

— Emily Dickinson, 1881

Modern Science's St. Nicolaus

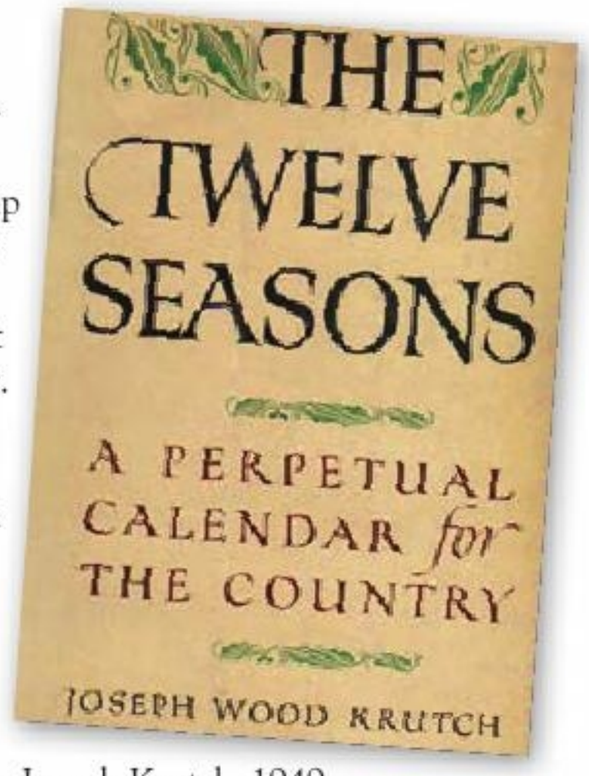
When you gaze up at the February night sky, take a moment to thank your lucky stars for Nicolaus Copernicus, the brilliant small town Polish polymath who was born on February 19, 1473, and grew up to become a devoted physician and church administrator who moonlighted as an amateur astronomer, making the most important discoveries of Renaissance cosmology — namely that the Earth rotates on an axis that explains the daily movement of heavenly bodies as well as the change of the seasons. Even more heretically, as he posited in *On Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*, his profoundly influential study of the heavens published at the time of his death in 1543, the Earth is not the center of the universe but, in fact, rotates around the sun — a heliocentric theory that turned both accepted Ptolemaic world view on its head and became the basis for mathematical astronomy for the next three hundred years, a major turning point in both science and religion. His mathematical calculations were also responsible for major revisions in the Gregorian calendar in 1582. Legend holds that he died at age 70 of apoplexy on the same day the final folio pages of his earth-shaking manuscript were presented to him by assistants. Reportedly his body was buried beneath Frombork Cathedral in the town on the edge of the Baltic Sea where he lived and worked and studied the stars for forty years. Archeologists searched for his remains for more than 200 years before locating them in a modest grave beneath the floor of the cathedral in 2010.

Camellia Madness

Growing camellias is an easy addiction — a sweet madness as our neighbor Max once observed. If anyone knows the power of camellias, it's Max, whose property is home to upward of 400 mature camellia shrugs that bring forth blooms from late autumn to early spring. Much of the appeal of camellias, of course, is the lavish variety of color and bloom they provide on the drabbest winter days. This Asian import, named for the young botanist and pharmacist Georg Joseph Kamel, who discovered it in Japan — though it grows in the wild from the steppes of the Himalayas to the rainforests of Indonesia — was brought to America by ocean traders in the late 18th century and immediately caught on with gardeners for its adaptability, glorious flowerings and relative low maintenance. Sometimes called the "Japanese Rose," with more than 200 known cultivars, camellias offer something for everyone, including a chance to compete for glory. Two of our favorite shows happen this month. First up is the venerable Tidewater Camellia Club's annual show and competition in Wilmington from 1 to 5 p.m. on Saturday, February 22, Walter Parsley Elementary School. For information on Show or membership: (910) 509-6792 or visit www.tidewatercamelliaclub.org. Another great show, the annual Fayetteville Camellia Club's spring show, happens on March 1 and 2 at the Cape Fear Botanical Garden, 536 North Eastern Boulevard (NC 301), from noon to 4 p.m. For further info on show or membership: Fayetevillecamelliaclub.org

The Garden Writer

"There are some optimists who search eagerly for the skunk cabbage which in February sometimes pushes itself up through the ice, and who call it a sign of spring. I wish that I could feel that way about it, but I do not. The truth of the matter, to me, is simply that skunk cabbage blooms in the winter time. There is no more cold-blooded animal than your frog, and you will not catch him stirring now."



From *Twelve Seasons* by Joseph Krutch, 1949

February 2014

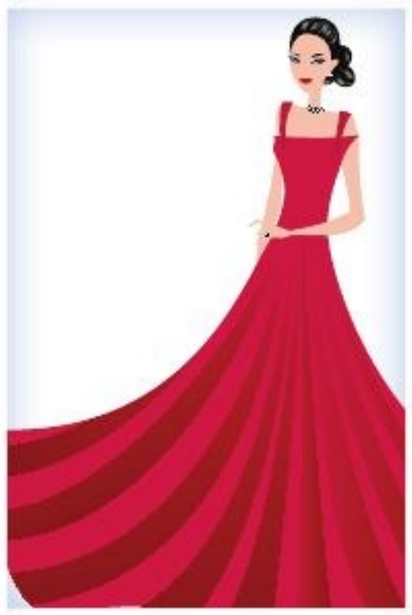
Arts Calendar

Cape Fear Museum exhibit opens

2/1

Live Theater at Thalian Hall

2/1-2



Red Dress Project

2/7

NC Symphony Concert

2/6

2/1 Science Exhibit Opens

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. *A View from Space.* A new, bilingual (Spanish and English), highly interactive, hands-on space exhibit that allows visitors to see the world from a satellite's perspective. On display through September 7. Admission: $7/adults; $6/seniors, college students, military; $4/youth. Free for children 5 and under. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4350 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

2/1 Hope for Health Gala

6:30 p.m. Fundraiser/celebration featuring silent auction, drinks, dinner and dancing with live music by Machine Gun. Admission: $80. Portion of proceeds benefits colon cancer research. The Terraces at Sir Tyler, 1826 Sir Tyler Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0270 or www.mednorth.org.

2/1 Legends in Concert

8 p.m. Multi-Grammy Award-winners and longtime friends Emmylou Harris and Rodney Crowell perform songs from their recently released collaborative album *Old Yellow Moon*. Tickets: $55. Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts.

2/1–2 Wine and Chocolate Festival

11 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Saturday); 12–4 p.m. (Sunday) Sample delectable local and regional products for sale along this European Street Marketplace. Admission: $15–20. Coastline Conference and Event Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonwineandchocolatefestival.com.

2/1–2 Live Theater

8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Thalian Association presents *Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Tickets: $30. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.thalian.org.

2/2 UNCW New Music Festival

3 p.m. Festival kicks off with *Returning Souls*, a documentary by Hu Tai-Li with original score by guest composer Shih-Hui Chen. The film follows the most famous ancestral house of the matrilineal Amis tribe in Taiwan in their quest to rebuild a temple destroyed more than forty years ago. Music faculty member Danijela eelj-Gualdi performs Returning Souls: Four Short Pieces on *Three Formosan Amis Legends*, a work for solo violin, adapted from the original film score. Free admission. UNCW King Hall, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3390.

2/2 Piano Virtuoso Concert

8 p.m. Emanuel Ax, artist in residence with the New York Philharmonic for the 2012/13 season. Ax received Grammy Awards for the second and third volumes of his cycle of Haydn's piano sonatas, and has made a series of Grammy-winning duets with cellist Yo-Yo Ma. UNCW, Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500.

2/3 UNCW New Music Festival

7:30 p.m. Two new works by guest composer David Kechley. *Waking Sparrows: Five Haiku Songs* is performed by Duo Sureño, featuring soprano Nancy King and guitarist Robert Nathanson. *Points of Departure: Five Pieces for Guitar and Saxophone* is performed by the Ryoanji Duo, featuring Frank Bongiorno on sax and Robert Nathanson on guitar. Comments by the composer precede each piece. Admission: $5. UNCW, Beckwith Recital Hall, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3390.

2/3–5 Cinematique Film

7:30 p.m. *Philomena*. A heart-tugging film based on the true story of Philomena Lee, a woman who embarks on a journey with a journalist to discover what happened to the son she was forced to give up for adoption when she was a teenager. Admission: $8. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.thalianhall.org.

2/4 UNCW New Music Festival

7:30 p.m. World premiere of yet untitled piece written by guest composer Shih-Hui Chen for flute and guitar performed by Mary Jo White and Robert Nathanson, plus a performance of *Ocean Calling* (for two pianos), written by guest composer Meira Warshauer and performed by Norman Bemelmans and Elizabeth Loparits. Comments by the compos-

Family Nature Program

2/8

Civil War Historical Weekend at the CAM

2/8–9

Art Show at BAC

2/21–22

ers precede each piece. Admission: $5. UNCW, Beckwith Recital Hall, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3390.

2/6 Youth Nature Program

1:30 p.m. Kids ages 6–11 learn about plants and animals living in the park through fun, hands-on activities. Theme: "Winter Mayhem." Pre-registration required. Admission: $5. Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

2/6 Shakespeare Club Film

7:30 p.m. *Henry V* (1944). Admission: $8. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.thalianhall.org.

2/6 NC Symphony Concert

7:30 p.m. The North Carolina Symphony Orchestra presents *Capriccio Espagnol.* UNCW, Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.ncsymphony.org.

2/6–8 NC Jazz Festival

Three evenings of some of the finest jazz musicians and entertainers in the state. See website for complete schedule, performer profiles and more. Admission: $15–50. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 793-1111 or ncjazzfestival.com.

2/6–9 Live Theater

8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Thalian Association presents *Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* Tickets: $30; $15 (Thursday). Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.thalian.org.

2/7 Red Dress Luncheon

11:30 a.m. The New Hanover Regional Medical Center Foundation Red Dress Project is designed to bring more women together in the battle against heart disease. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 815-5002 or www.nhrmc.org/reddress.

2/7–9 NC Dance Festival

8 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday) Local artists perform alongside touring choreographers. Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-4995 or www.ncdancefestival.org.

2/8 Family Nature Program

9:30 a.m. Learn how to build your own backyard bird oasis, plus birding basics. Pre-registration required. Admission: $15. Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

2/8 Met Opera in HD

1–5 p.m. Live broadcast of Dvorak's *Rusalka* from New York's Metropolitan Opera. Pre-performance lecture 45 minutes prior to screening. Tickets: $24; $20/members; $15/students. UNCW, Lumina Theater, 615 Hamilton Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195.

2/8 Cape Fear Heart Ball

6 p.m. – midnight. Black tie event features silent and live auctions, cocktail reception, gourmet dinner, and live music with Jack Jack 180. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-9270 or www.heart.org/wilmingtonheartball.

2/8 Encore's Best of 2014

7 p.m. Awards Party and Masquerade Ball hosted by Pineapple-Shaped Lamps. Doors open at 6 p.m. Admission: $10. Proceeds benefit Kids Making It. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 616-9882 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

2/8 Masterworks Concert

8 p.m. Wilmington Symphony presents *A Change is Gonna Come.* Explore the landmark 1964 Civil Rights bill through the music and songs of the era with readings from Dr. Martin Luther King's work. Featuring the Williston Alumni Community Choir and student concerto competition winners. Tickets: $27; $25; $6/youth. Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts.

2/8–9 Civil War Historical Weekend

Family fun interacting with Confederate,

Union and U.S. Colored Troops reenactors. Enjoy the battle skirmish, sutlers, period music and family art activities and more. See website for complete schedule. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: www.cameronartmuseum.com; www.battleofforksroad.org.

2/9 Books to Movies

2 p.m. Catch a free movie starring Leonardo DiCaprio, based on a book by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Call for more hints. Adults only. BYOP=Bring Your Own Popcorn or other snacks. Free admission. Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6371 or www.nhcgov.com/library.

2/10 Artist Lecture

4–6 p.m. Small Works Show opens with an artist lecture. Exhibit features the selected works from the Mountain Sculptors organization of Western North Carolina. On display through March 14. The Wilma W Daniels Gallery, Cape Fear Community College, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7691 or cfcc.edu/blogs/wilmagallery.

2/10 Panel Discussion

6 p.m. Hollywood East, a panel discussion about the film industry in the Port City. Moderator: Jeff Hidek. Film industry professionals: Johnny Griffin, Bill Vassar, Vanessa Neimeyer and Terry Linehan. Free admission. Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6371 or www.nhcgov.com/library.

2/10 Prologue

7–8 p.m. Join Ben Steelman of *StarNews* and WHQR with historian and writer Carole Fink for light refreshments and a discussion of Fink's new book, *Global Cold War*. WHQR's MC Erny Gallery, 254 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1640 or www.whqr.org.

2/10–15 Oscar Shorts

Cinematique presents *Oscar Shorts*, the short films nominated for Academy Awards. Films TBA. Admission: $8. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: whqr.org.

2/12 Girls Night Out Purse Swap

7–10 p.m. Celebrate the opening of *Collection Selections: Handbags* by trading a new or gently used purse for something "new." Enjoy wine and hors d'oeuvres as you swap. RSVP by February 7. Admission: $15–17. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4372 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

Wine & Beer Walk

2/22

2/13 Jazz at the CAM

6:30 p.m. Cameron Art Museum and Cape Fear Jazz Society present the jazzy romantic sounds of Stardust. Admission: $12; $8/members; $5/students. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: www.cameronartmuseum.com.

2/13 Live Theater

7 p.m. *The Vagina Monologues*. UNCW, Lumina Theater, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: www.uncw.edu/lumina.

2/13 Piano Masterworks

8 p.m. Resident pianists Norman Bemelmans and Elizabeth Loparits perform a Valentine's Eve program of music inspired by love, passion and romance. The program includes selections by Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Grieg and Rachmaninoff. Tickets: $15–18. Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts.

2/13–16 Live Theater

8 p.m.; 2 p.m. (Sunday) *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as Southwest Africa, From the German Sudwestafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915* is about a group of actors exploring, devising, and rehearsing a production about what has been called the first genocide of the 20th century, which occurred when German colonialists in Africa exterminated members of two indigenous tribes. The play is set in a theater and a rehearsal room and though it appears improvisational, it's completely scripted. Directed by Anne Berkeley. Admission: $5–12. UNCW Cultural Arts Building, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-2061.

2/13–16 Live Theater

8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Big Dawg Productions presents *Romantic Comedy*. Admission: $15–20. Cape Fear Playhouse, 613 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 367-5237 or www.bigdawgproductions.com.

2/14 Raiders Ball

6 p.m. Cocktails and dinner, plus live music from Gwen Hughes and The Retro Jazz Kats. 1940s dress encouraged. Tickets: $65. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 616-9882; www.brooklynartsnc.com; www.raisingraiders.org.

2/14 Live Theater

7:30 p.m. *Driving Miss Daisy*. Admission: $11–30. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Bruswick Community College, 50 College Road Northwest, Supply. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

2/14–16 Children's Theater

7 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) *Seussical Jr.* Admission: $12. Hannah Block Second Street Stage, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or www.wilmingtoncommunityarts.org.

2/16 Monty's Home Pet Expo

11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Nearly 100 pet-related vendors showcasing a variety of pet goods and services, a silent auction, and a Kid's Korner filled with games, prizes and interactive education about pet care. Proceeds benefit Monty's Home dog rescue and prison training program. Admission: $5. Coastline Events Center. 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 259-7911 or www.montyshome.org.

2/19–23 Live Theater

8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Opera House Theatre Company presents *Evita!* Tickets: $29. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.thalianhall.org.

2/21–22 Art Show at BAC

3–9 p.m. (Friday); 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Saturday) *Art For All 4* features cutting-edge works by fifty-plus local artists. Paintings, illustrations, sculptures, photography, watercolors, glass, metal, woodwork and more, priced $25–250. Food trucks and cash bar available. Admission: $5 (good for both days; includes raffle ticket); children 12 and under free. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 616-9882 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

2/21–23 Spring Home Show

11 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Friday); 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Sunday) American Consumer Shows (ACS) Spring Home Show features hundreds of exhibits; designed for homeowners in all stages of remodeling, landscaping and decorating. Concessions available. Free admission. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (888) 433-3976.

2/22 Polar Plunge

11 a.m. – 3:05 p.m. Brave swimmers take a dip in the chilly Atlantic, plus live music with Steele Drum Band and Dog's Ave., art, food and more. Proceeds benefit Special Olympics New Hanover County. Free for all spectators. Carolina Beach Boardwalk, Cape Fear Boulevard. Registration: www.plungenhc.com.

2/22 Bowling Benefit

12 p.m. Bowling for Backpacks & Bicycles is a benefit for the Good Shepherd Center. Participants are encouraged to donate backpacks, backpack items or bicycle donations. Monetary donations, canned foods and dry goods are always appreciated. Registration begins at 11 a.m. Cardinal Lanes Beach Bowl, 7026 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 409-3369 or www.goodshepherdwilmington.org.

2/22 Tidewater Camellia Club Show

1–5 p.m. Camellia experts display over 1,000 blooms for evaluation by American Camellia Society judges. Other highlights include floral arrangements and a children's art display. Camellias available for purchase. Free and open to the public. Walter L. Parsley Elementary School, 3518

Masonboro Loop Road, Wilmington. Info: www.tidewatercamelliaclub.org.

2/22 Wine & Beer Walk

1–6 p.m. A self-guided tasting tour of restaurants and drinking establishments in downtown Wilmington. Admission: $15. Info: (216) 374-8884.

2/22 Music on Market

7:30 p.m. The American Boy choir from Princeton, New Jersey. Free admission. St. Andrews-Covenant Presbyterian Church, 1416 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-9693 or www.musiconmarket.org.

2/23 Sacred Harp Singers

2–4 p.m. A dynamic form of a cappella social singing that dates back to Colonial America. Songbooks provided. Free and open to the public. Donations appreciated. Weyerhaeuser Reception Hall, Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: www.cameronartmuseum.com.

2/24 Lecture: Defining American

7 p.m. Jose Antonio Vargas presents "Defining American." Vargas is a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer, and former lecturer at Georgetown University. At age 16, he discovered he was an undocumented immigrant and, despite his immense success as a journalist, he kept his immigration status a secret until recently. Admission: $10. UNCW Burney Center, 601 South College Road Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3285 or www.uncw.edu/presents.

2/27 Jimmy Webb in Concert

8 p.m. Best known for the instant classics he provided for artists such as Glen Campbell, Richard Harris, the Fifth Dimension, Art Garfunkel and Linda Ronstadt, Jimmy Webb is one of the most accomplished songwriters and composers of our time. Tickets: $18–35. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.thalianhall.org; www.jimmywebb.com.

2/28 Readers Luncheon

12–2 p.m. Meet-and-greet and Q&A with authors Candis Terry and Jennifer Bernard. Admission: $30. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.tastybooktours.com.

2/28 Art Exhibit Reception

6–9 p.m. Small Works Show. Exhibit features the selected works from the Mountain Sculptors organization of Western North Carolina. On display through March 14. The Wilma W. Daniels Gallery, Cape Fear Community College, 200 Hanover Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7691 or cfcc.edu/blogs/wilmagallery.

2/28 Live Theater

8 p.m. Opera House Theatre Company presents *Evita!* Tickets: $29. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.thalianhall.org.

2/28–3/2 Tasty Authors Weekend

Three days of learning, sharing and meeting authors, aspiring authors, bloggers and readers. Keynote speakers are Joanne Rock and Pamela Palmer. Admission: $80–200. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.tastybooktours.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Tuesday Improv Comedy

8 p.m. LitProve: Long Form Improv at Old Books on Front Street, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6657 or oldbooksonfrontst.com.

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM

12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Wednesday Free Wine Tasting

5–6:30 p.m. For this week's special, visit Sweet n Savory Cafe on Facebook. Sweet n Savory Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.sweetnsavorycafe.com.

Wednesday Free Beer Tasting

5–6:30 p.m. For this week's special, visit Sweet n Savory Pub on Facebook. Sweet n Savory Pub, 2012 Eastwood Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 679-8101 or www.thepubatsweetnsavory.com.

Wednesday Guided Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. A growing community of people who desire connection within themselves and with others. McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Donation: $10–15. Info: (949) 547-4402 or allovehealing.com.

Guided Meditation

Wednesdays

Wednesday ComedyNOW

8 p.m. Local, regional and national acts, open mics, standup, films and more. Bar and kitchen open. Tickets: $3. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Thursday Yoga at CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. These sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Thursday CAM Public Tours

7:30 p.m. Explore the newest exhibits at Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Friday Yoga at CAM

5:30–6:30 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. These sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Saturday Super Saturday Fun Time

3 p.m. Live theater and variety show. Tickets: $8. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Sunday CAM Public Tours

2 p.m. Explore the newest exhibits at Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

To add a calendar event, please contact Ashley at ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

Port City People

Opening Reception for Fourth Friday *Interconnections*
MC Erny Gallery
Friday, December 27, 2013

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Susan Bullers, Jim Beck, Valerie Robertson, Becky Wagg

Jason Hess and Michelle Crouch

Karen Zach and Frank Scioslia

Krista Kieser and Kerri Skaggs

Barbara Squires and Nancy Tatum

Vince and Vicky Smith

Kylie Lamb and Kim Tatum

Rhea Murry, Joel Sisson, Anne Canada

Michael Norris and Jan Brewington

Jenna Ault-Holcombe and Starr Holcombe

Janet Leigh, Bert Blake, and Alicia Alexander

Neguine Caldwell

Port City People

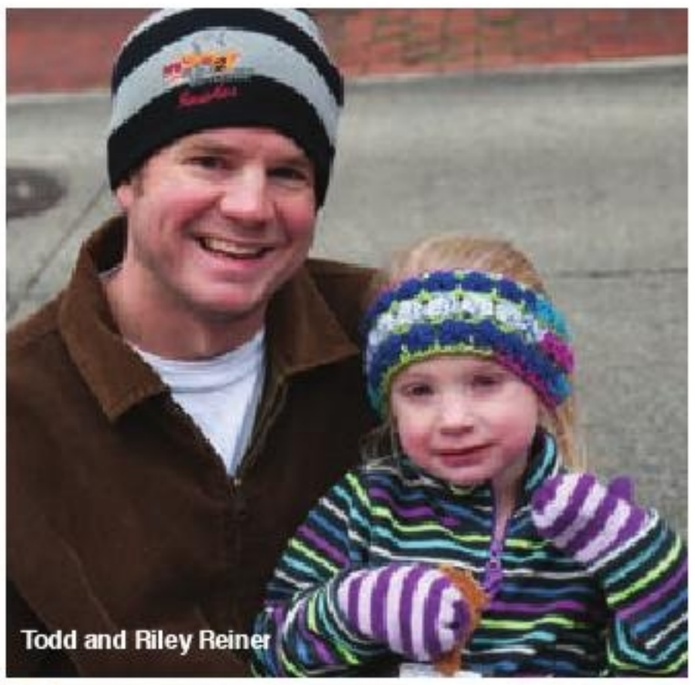
New Year's Romp

Saturday, January 4, 2014

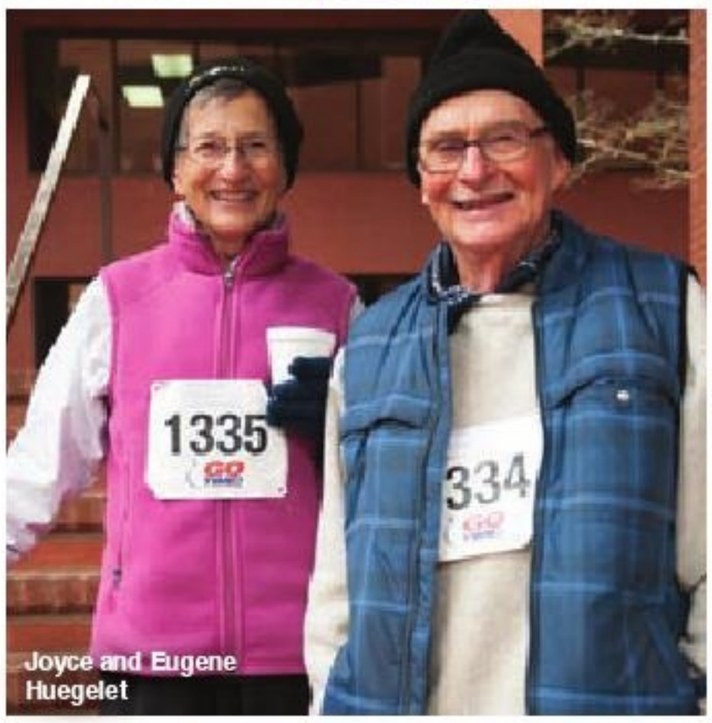
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Rhonda Shilawski and Mike Duncan

Brandi, Brent and Samuel Holland


Todd and Riley Reiner

Carla and Daemion Johnson


Joyce and Eugene Huegelet

Angela Miller, Rhonda Shilawski and Shawn Tunis

Gianna Blundo

Billy Van Vianen, Hugh Crews

Allison, Robert and Rebecca Boggs, Ron Wormwood

Heather Quinn

Shawna Shelton

Patrick Cavallaro

Brittany Pettway and Holly Locklear

Port City People

105th Anniversary of the Cape Fear chapter of the American Red Cross

Thursday, November 14, 2013

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Vicki LaBelle, Ron Hasson, Jessica Watson

Peggy O'Leary and Bill Brent

Vicki LaBelle and Kent Anderson

Jessica Ferguson and Evan McMilan

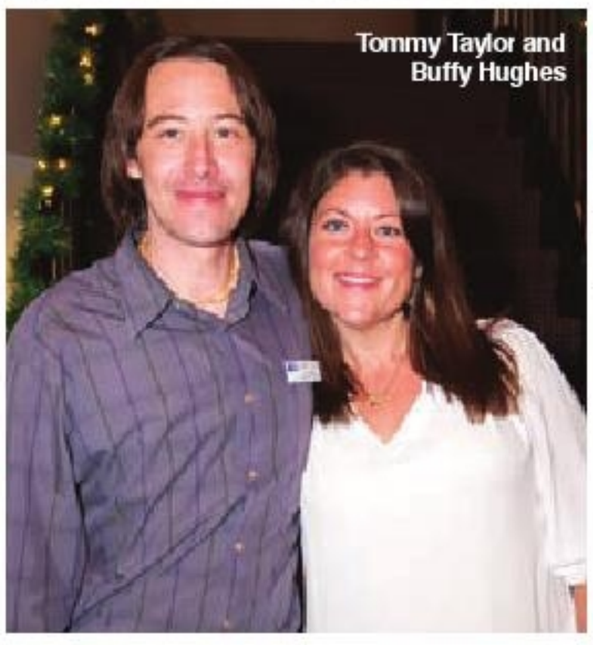
Chris and Stephanie Dunn, Kay and Kent Anderson, Brad and Joy Barth

Danielle Russ and Orbie Smith

Lisa Golightly, LCMDR Benjamin Golightly, Ron Hasson, Linda and CMDR Jeff Randall

Back: Diane Matz-Kane, Victoria Kling, David Garrison, Autumn Mihm, Matt Pollmann, Kelly Van Houten, Evan McMilan
Front: Josh Cain, Vicki LaBelle, Bill Brent, Wendy Flynn

Diane Matz-Kane, Megan Flynn, Kelly Van Houten



Tommy Taylor and Buffy Hughes

David Garrison and Ron Hasson

Port City People

Reeds Holiday Event

Thursday, December 12, 2013

Photographs by Ariel Keener

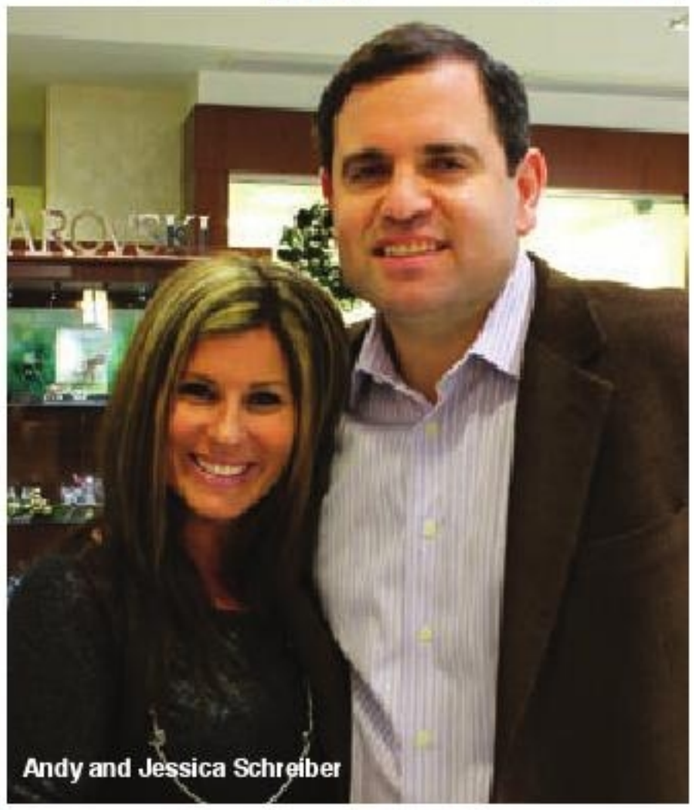
Becky Jarman, Ed Rios, contest winner
Stephanie Miller, Heather Manyatis

Patricia Griffith and Francis Willetts

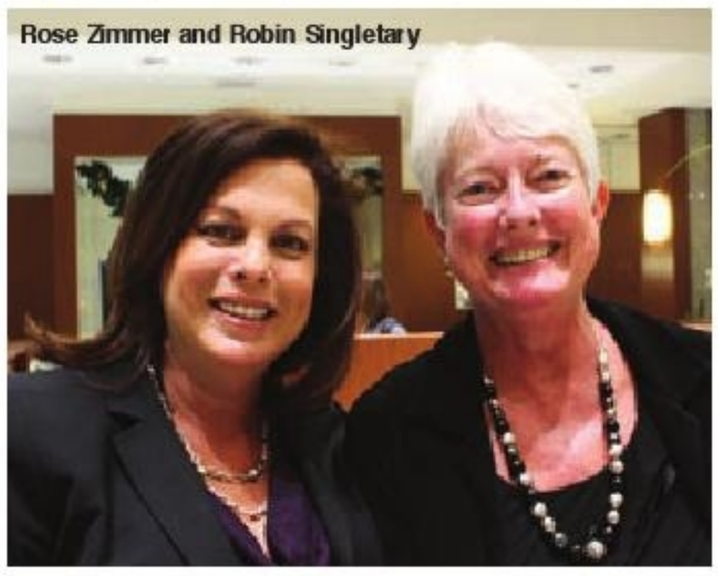
Benny

Abi Mattis, Tessa Young, Ashley Wahl

Roger and Linda Boggs



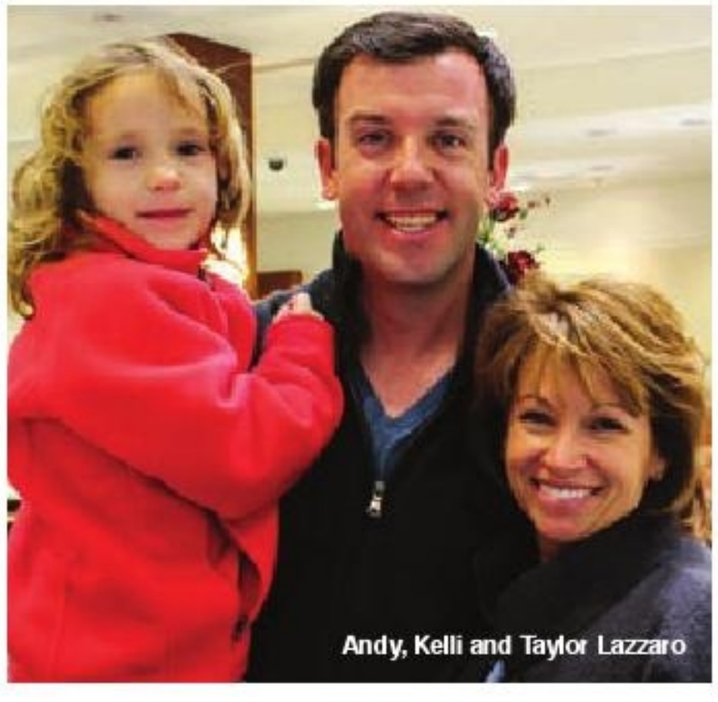
Andy and Jessica Schreiber



Rose Zimmer and Robin Singletary

Lauren Frick and Crystal Carlough

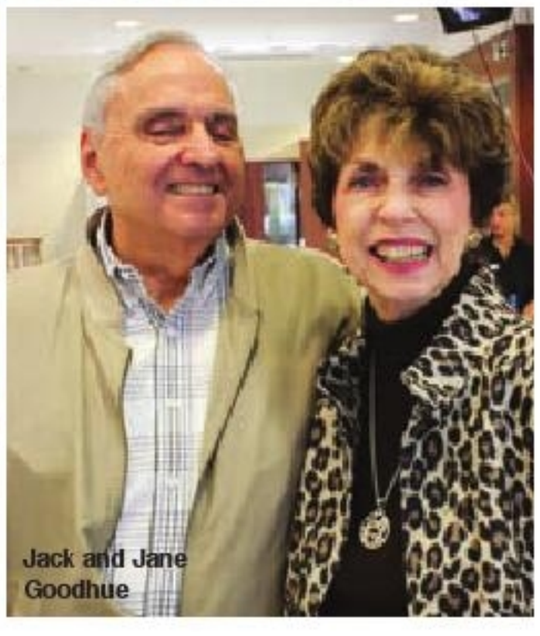
Melissa Beck, Dr. Lenard Edralin and Carrie Icard



Andy, Kelli and Taylor Lazzaro

Becky Jarman and Ed Rios

Roberta Zimmer



Jack and Jane Goodhue

Port City People

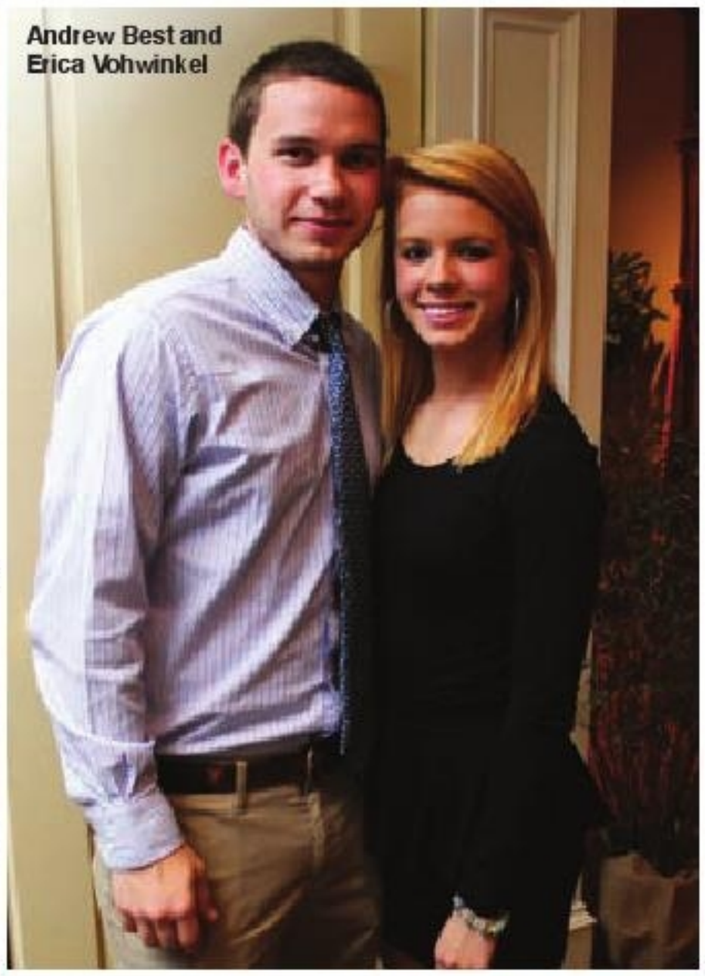
Wilmington Interfaith Hospitality Network Gala
Friday, November 22, 2013
Photographs by Ariel Keener

Terry Allgood, Laurel Wilson WIHN Co-Chair, Kendall Fuqua

Connor Barth and Chaffin Mitchell

Ashley Miller, State Rep. Rick Catlin, Dana Fisher, Anneliz Hannan

Jonathan Cooper, Haley Cowen, Casey Barth, Tom Barth


Andrew Best and Erica Vohwinkel

Lynda Shell, Sandy Collette, Barb Lenz

Linda Best and Barbara Potter

Ken White presented with a gift from WIHN by Laurel Wilson

Anne Best, WIHN Executive Director, Billy Best

David and Kelli Best

Ginger and Michael Wilson

One Super Month

Best put FTD and Godiva on speed dial, honey

By Astrid Stellanova

What is February good for? Beau says it's good for the Super Bowl. Well, I'm fond of indoor plumbing, too, and remember when Daddy got ours installed. But if it's so super, then why ain't super bowls self-cleaning like ovens?

It don't take a fool-for-love psychic, like Astrid, to tell you that what is really good about the month of February is the 14th. Put Godiva and FTD on speed dial. And speaking of loving, I got me a new sky-high hairdo I'm calling the hair way to heaven. You just oughta see it – makes Beau go crazy!

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
If you think last year's birthday was a humdinger you don't know nothing yet. There's a transit in your sign coming up, which, combined with this being a nine year in numerology, means it's your turn in the catbird's seat. Don't get tied up in knots over finances or love – if you're tempted to tie knots, join the Scouts or finish that macramé pot holder you started in second grade. Or try bondage – 'cause lucky in love you are, and if you don't have satin sheets you ought to. Satin's good for your hair, too, and good hair can make the difference in a person's destiny. Trust your intuition, 'cause things this month will happen faster than a knife fight in a phone booth.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
You are a no-means-maybe kind of person. But this month, you might want to put a little whoa there in your giddy-up. Somebody trolling MatchmakersForever.com might not be the special someone you thought. If he ain't from around here, he might be from somewhere else where everybody with a brain cell has already dumped him. Just ask Astrid how she knows this. (Just because he claims a duck can pull a truck don't mean it's got a trailer hitch.) This month, you may get a visitation from somebody long dead. Don't freak out. Happens to me all the time.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
Your average February workday is like that cute, doe-eyed actress Sandra Bullock had acting in *Gravity*. You're doing your job best you know how, and then, BAM – completely disconnected from the spaceship. I'm betting right now you feel low on oxygen. Come February 28th you have an exciting day, and a good one for hit-the-road time. But don't take along somebody who has been sucking the oxygen out of the room, and you know who I mean. They are too poor to pay attention, and can't help with directions nohow.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
There's a reason Ford named a sedan after your sign. You ain't a Ferrari, and sometimes you're hard to start, but you're built to last, and once you get cranking, you can go forever. However, with Venus in transit through your sign, I wouldn't suggest road trips unless you like off-the-road adventure. If you go anyway, just like a Taurus would do despite all warning, you might have a hissy fit with a tail on it when the itinerary changes, and change it will. Trust Astrid, 'cause I have busted through a few stop signs myself, and what happened next wasn't always pretty.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
To be so smart, you sure have got a stupid streak. Lately your mind has been working like lightning, with one bright flash, and then it's all over. Complete darkness. Mercury is in retrograde, so don't go signing any contracts – you got commitment issues anyhow, which might come in handy for once. Instead of buying vacuum cleaners and knives from door-to-door salesmen, get your groove on and enjoy your sexy self. This month is going to seem like a steering wheel on a mule; totally useless, unless you like circling and backing up.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
Intuition can tell you a lot this month. Like the only time the world is knocking at your door is when you're in the toilet. You've been in a blue funk because you didn't see something that shoulda been obvious, but hey, think of it as a pick in your pantyhose. It ain't a game changer, and won't keep you from enjoying the party. But given the retrograde this month, don't bend over backward for anybody unless you've got on new underwear and just want to show it off.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
It's a three year in numerology for Leo, which means you're heading down life's banister faster than a lizard on crack. Let's hope all the splinters ain't facing your way since Mercury is in retro on the 12th. If go you must, well, have some tweezers handy. But, hey, you romantic fool: The 14th is a good day for you, with plenty of romance with your partner. Bumpin' uglies in the movies is fun, but don't you just hate it when you spill your drink and popcorn, especially when it's that jumbo bag? And it's buttered?

Virgo (August 23 –September 22)
You'll have some cutting edge conversations with yourself this month. If anyone's listening, they might get the wrong idea. Especially your partner. This is the kind of astral situation going on in February, with the first retrograde this year, causing things that would make a thinking person slow the heck down. Speaking of slow, somebody owes you money and you stand a good chance of getting it back by the first of March. Roll the dice slow, too, Honey, and you will probably roll snake eyes – the game is on.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
If the boss hollers, or your assistant quits without working a notice, you can thank Mercury, which is retrograde in your sixth house. Back-up your files and run a scan. When you need a nice shoulder to sob on, be sure you get off on the shoulder of the road. At least your home life looks good, Honey. I always think when things are testing me, it's a good time to wear power colors and a good lamé. Gold. Silver. Copper. Besides, at the end of the month your mojo comes back, and it's the return of the nerds with a vengeance.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
Double-sided tape wasn't invented by one of my hair clients at the beauty shop like she claimed. Turned out she just felt inferior because she wasn't a natural redhead like yours truly. She was a mess, like we say in the South, and she sure did have me going for a while. With the retrograde situation, your work life may seem like a mess, too, so hang on, because, you got a good thing going when it comes to the love department. And at long last, you may get credit for what you have been doing behind the scenes all along that nobody noticed.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
Don't let that career triumph you had last month turn tragic just because you can't stop talking about it. All that nice cash is going to feather your nest. But with Mercury retrograde in Pisces, you might have a slip of the tongue or just forget something and have a big ole UH OH. Your social life is kicking up, so it's tempting to share everything with everybody. Don't. They don't care and it don't matter: It's like you are a kleptomaniac at a nudist colony. Try and get a grip.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
You feel flush, right? And it isn't the thermostat. It's your bank account. Yes, that bank statement is heating up, and it's the sexiest thing going on for you this month – brothers and sisters, you are in the black. Or, maybe it's your partner's made a big deposit? Check it out, Sherlock. Speaking of checking, this February is creative. Different. You feel free, experimental. Kind of like the time you used Magic Marker for permanent makeup. But sometimes, your hunches work out. So, work it, Baby!

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

My Day as a Movie Star

Don't try to act. Just figure out how to take off your pants

By Clyde Edgerton

Papadaddy, said my young son, Nathaniel, were you ever in a movie?

Oh yes. *Killer Diller.* It came out not long after you were born and I had one single line to say. I can't even remember what the line was, but it was exciting to be an actor for a day.

What do you remember most?

Let's see. Two things. No, three things. First, I remember driving up to the big trucks and tents and trailers on this college campus in Missouri where the movie was being filmed. And sitting there in a parking lot was a green half-way house van with "B.O.T.A. House — Back On Track Again" painted on the side.

This wouldn't have been so amazing except the movie was made from a book I wrote back in the '90s and in the book I made up just such a van and had seen it in my imagination only. But suddenly here was the very same van in real life and it was like magic. Like dreaming something and then suddenly there it is and you can reach out and touch it.

Then the second thing. In the movie I was supposed to wear a suit and tie and I was sent to a fairly big room on campus where two women were waiting for me. They were in charge of dressing people for the movie. They said hello and introduced themselves and were very nice. They had two suits, a gray suit and a blue suit, and a white shirt and tie hanging on a clothes rack and they were going to photograph me in each suit so the director could decide which was best for me. All this was of course very new to me but I wanted to seem relaxed, at ease, like I knew what I was doing, even though I didn't. One of them said, "Please put on the shirt and tie and that gray suit there."

I stood without moving. They were writing something down and talking. Was I supposed to just change clothes — including pulling off my *pants* — with them right there in the room? *Is that what a movie star would do?* Or should I find a bathroom to change in? Would they laugh at me if I left, looking for a bathroom? Would a movie star normally wear boxer shorts or the jockey-type I had on? Should I ask for a "dressing room"? No, I was *in* the dressing room.

I walked over and got the shirt and tie off the hanger. I stood there. If I *started* to undress in front of them I'd need to finish.

Well, I couldn't just keep standing there. Should I sort of smile and pull off my pants like I knew what I was doing? Like there was nothing to it?

"Will I be wearing this shirt and tie for both suits?" I asked, frantic for a bit of conversation which might lead to somebody telling me what to do.

"Yes." They went back to what they were doing.

"OK," I said.

I carefully and slowly took off the coat I was wearing, hung it up, looked at the gray suit. Looked over at them. They were paying me no attention.

I looked at my watch.

One of the women turned, pointed toward a door, and said, "Oh, you can change in there if you like."

"Yes," I said. "Sure."

It was a bathroom. I walked in like I knew what I was doing. The bathroom was small and clean — with a convenient chair for my clothes. When I came back out, the women took several polaroid photos. Then I did the same for the blue suit. And that was that.

What was the third thing?

I remember trying hard to say my line like I thought an actor would, and a woman who was an acting coach heard me practicing and she said, "Stop trying to act. Just say the line."

Was that good advice?

Very.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir, and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

PORT CITY JAVA

Coffee
Espresso
Breakfast
Lunch
Shakes
Smoothies
FREE WI-FI

| www.portcityjava.com |

17 Locations in Greater Wilmington

YOUR PURCHASE
YOUR REWARD

Receive FREE JENN-AIR® APPLIANCES valued at up to $3,848 with the Your Purchase Your Reward Event.

Don’t miss the chance to receive a free dishwasher when you purchase a select wall oven and cook top or select Pro-Style® Stainless range. Purchase a select built-in refrigerator at the same time and receive a free ventilation or under-counter refrigeration appliance, too.

These savings are valued at up to $3,848. Offer valid through June 30, 2014.

FERGUSON®
Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery

FERGUSON.COM

Wilmington
1925 Dawson Street
(910) 343-0334

Shallotte
4640 E Coast Lane
(910) 755-5060

©2014 Ferguson Enterprises, Inc.